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THE UNOFFICIAL HONEYMOON

BY

DOLF WYLLARDE



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AN APOLOGY

I DEDICATE this tale of pure imagination to those people who are so tired of conventional existence that they welcome an escape though only for a few hours, and through the pages of a book. It has no parallel in real life, and is, I believe, utterly impossible in all its details. Nevertheless it is an interesting problem to consider how men and women would act if entirely deprived of that wholesome fear of the policeman round the corner in which we all live. It is manifestly unfair to judge character even in a book by such a standard, because the Reader is moderately sure that the end of the story will be rescue, or at least the reappearance of law and order in lives swept bare of them for a space. But consider what a topsy-turvy outlook it would be to the characters, who did *not* know, who were gradually convinced that there was no rescue to be hoped, and for whom there was no such thing as Public Opinion. The rules of the game are all changed ; for such as them the old standards are helplessly inapplicable, and the moral code is reduced to the simplicity of dealing fairly with each other as regards the bare necessities of existence—food, shelter, and warmth. The consequences are quite impossible to generalize, depending as they must do upon temperament. What in some cases would be suicide, or religious mania, in others might be passion, or a return to the merely animal. I ask the Reader's indulgence, for that portion of the book which is placed upon the Island at any rate.

DOLF WYLLARDE

WEYMOUTH, 1911

THE UNOFFICIAL HONEYMOON

CHAPTER I

“ The great things of the World come suddenly,
With God behind them”

IT had been a beautiful sunset. Bars of red and orange, fading to pale gold, had stained the pure blue of the sky and turned the clouds into fairy palaces, save for a curious edging of brown that tended to spoil their beauty. As the sun sank, too, the colours he flung across the North Pacific Ocean were almost prismatic, and beyond any ordinary display even in latitudes so near the equator. Every one on board the *Aristo* had agreed that it was the most unusual sunset they had ever seen, though their experiences varied from Africa to the Caribbean, and down to Cape Horn.

After the sun had gone a deep silence seemed to settle down on the sea despite the long swell that every now and then swept from one horizon to another—a heaving of the whole glassy surface like the throb of an unquiet heart. People gathered in knots about the deck, and said how heavy the atmosphere felt, and they were sure there would be a storm because the animals were so uneasy ; and through all the desultory converse, and the steady throb of the *Aristo*’s engines as she trod the water-floors, came the incessant lowing of the ship’s cows, and the intermittent baying of a big hound that some man from the Warrego was taking home to Vancouver.

After dinner the heat seemed to increase with the

darkness which came down thick, like a pall ; and, as by common consent, the passengers streamed up on to the decks, the steerage disporting itself for'ard under the lifted bows of the ship, while the first-class took possession of the deck-chairs, and fixed seats amidships, and the second-class spread itself out on the poop. The decks were all alive with humanity, which gasped and lolled in the tainted air and asked aimless questions of itself as to what this unnatural atmospheric disturbance portended. Nobody was really alarmed, however, so long as the officers went about their duties with the same serene faces, and the routine of the ship did not flag. It gave people something to talk of, and enlivened the monotony of card-parties and scandal which had begun to pall during the two weeks out from Sydney.

Everybody seemed to be gathered into groups of two or three except one solitary girl who was leaning over the railing on the starboard side and had not altered her attitude since she came up from the saloon and turned her shoulder to the company in general, staring out into the uncanny darkness in a morose fashion peculiar to her. Nobody noticed her very much, or attempted to join her, those who had spoken to her so far finding her extremely repellent in manner, and unattractive in appearance. She was rather tall and thin, but carried herself badly, so that her round back detracted from her height. Her hair was dark, and cut short to her head—not cropped like a boy's, but rather after a fashion that might be termed "a mop," for it was very thick and would not lie smoothly. Moreover, she was sallow and unhealthy in appearance, and her brown eyes were full of the discontent that spoiled the expression of her lips. She was the sister of the young Scotch missionary who spent so much time in the fo'c'sle, though he travelled first-class, and who had been pronounced charming in manner by anyone to whom he had spoken in his rare appearances upon deck : but there was certainly little likeness between Donald and Leslie Mackelt, either physically or mentally, and those who would have welcomed him amongst them

were glad to leave the girl alone. Donald was tall and fair and blue-eyed, with a typical Scotch face, high-cheekboned and fresh skinned ; he spoke with a soft Scotch accent too, whereas his sister was purely English in voice and pronunciation.

"I hate this voyage!" Leslie Mackelt was saying to herself as she pressed her eager heart against the hard railing with a perverse pleasure in bruising her woman's breast. "And I hate all these people! They are vulgar and stupid and narrow—they can talk of nothing but stock and the value of land, just as they did in Queensland. All Australians are uneducated—they have never even read anything." She did not realize that the narrowness was in herself, and that she lacked the touchstone in her nature which should bring out the best in those around her. The stockmen and bushmen would have been friendly and kind to the delicate girl who travelled with her enthusiastic brother on his rough road to what he considered a high calling ; but Leslie had regarded them with open contempt because their wide knowledge did not include the little curriculum of her school life. She thought she was educated, whereas she was only taught, and that within a narrower boundary than a sheep-pen.

"I suppose the Mauritius people think they are better class," she went on, with a secret envy she tried to sneer down. "But they are only vulgar, really. Mrs. Gellert—the 'May Queen'!—and her attendant swains, Mr. Dobell and Major Trelawny! Just because they happen to belong to the Army and to have been stationed in that little island! They spend a lot of money on dress and think it's smart, but they are so silly and brainless I wouldn't care to talk to them. I wonder if there is another person on board besides myself who can appreciate Keats' 'Ode to the Nightingale'! All *their* sense goes in choosing clothes—and then, besides being silly, that's *wrong*."

Leslie sighed in her heart while the last word found its usual expression on her lips. She had been most carefully trained to regard vanity and extravagance as

actual sin, and though her environment had been that of the English Methodist rather than the Scotch Free Church, her outlook and her brother's only differed in one essential point. Donald thought with real fervour that such existences as Mrs. Gellert's and Major Trelawny's were frivolous and worldly, therefore to be deeply pitied and prayed for. If he could he would have preached his own gospel to them, reclaimed, and rejoiced over them as wandering sheep. Leslie thought that they were frivolous and worldly too, and condemned them savagely because her soul cried out for the prettiness, the far-off glamour of their unknown lives, that she saw with unaccustomed eyes. She had experienced so little that Mrs. Gellert's tired beauty was a dazzling and a wicked thing to her; and she knew, and writhed to know, that she would have given all her petted intellectualism to be on the same terms of easy intimacy with Major Trelawny as were the Mauritius set.

It is quite probable that Mrs. Gellert would have been ready to be converted by Donald Mackelt, whom she knew as the "handsome missionary," but as it chanced they had never come in each other's way. Donald was always in the steerage, holding service for those who would attend, preaching, praying, doing his work as he saw it with the zeal of the fanatic. Mrs. Gellert, as a garrison belle, still held her small court on the home-ward-bound vessel, and rarely took any notice of the other passengers save to ridicule them to her own set. This was a small clique of Army people who had agreed to return to England on a holiday via Vancouver, partly for the sake of a few days in Sydney before they caught the connecting boat. Mrs. Gellert had never set foot in Australia, and this would be her last chance, for her husband was following her to England with his regiment in three months' time. Leslie was right in her contemptuous designation of this lady as the "May Queen," for Mrs. Gellert's name being May the title had been bestowed on her years ago when Colonel Gellert brought her out with him on foreign service, and the girl had overheard the other women of the party using

it. While she stood in her discontent at the railing on the starboard side, Mrs. Gellert was surrounded by her usual retinue—Major Trelawny, Mr. Dobell of her husband's regiment, Mrs. Donaldson of the Gunners, and one or two more men who hovered on the outskirts of the charmed circle, half admitted and half on sufferance. May Gellert was a pretty woman still, though she was five-and-thirty; as she rested in her deck-chair with her high-heeled shoes stretched out beyond the fluffy frills of her dinner-gown, she might well claim the position of idle beauty.

"It's too hot for words!" Mrs. Donaldson had just said for the fifth time, lighting the cigarette that Dobell had offered her. "I feel pretty old that I ever consented to come home by this route! I never knew the equator so obtrusive before, and I've been over it about ten times."

"It's not the heat so much as this dead air that gives me the pip," said Dobell cheerfully, twitching his shoulders as if he were really suffering from prickly heat. "There's some disturbance goin' on in the nether regions, or my name's not Joseph!"

"I thought it was Sandy!" said Mrs. Gellert with a yawn. "My husband says the Mess was more than godparents to you."

"Too bad, Mrs. Gellert!"—but the boy laughed at his Colonel's wife, passing his hand over his red hair. "I tried to make 'Not for Joe!' my typical song when I joined, but the thing wouldn't come off."

There was a languid silence. The air was certainly flat and stale as in a city, rather than clean with the purity of mid-ocean, and a faint sense rather than a smell of sulphur made Mr. Dobell's reference to the nether regions singularly apt. Through the stagnant night the cows lowed restlessly, and the great hound bayed his protest.

"It is hot!" said Mrs. Donaldson for the sixth time.

"Do you think so? D'you know I was just beginning to feel a little chilly. Major Trelawny, I wish you would go and find me a wrap," said Mrs. Gellert

carelessly to the tall man who was leaning against the deck-house beside her.

Mrs. Donaldson raised her brows in the darkness. Dobell stared blankly into the blank night. The heat was so undeniable that the request was a rather obvious display of power. But Major Trelawny was the prime feather in Mrs. Gellert's cap, and she enjoyed her command of his services for the voyage at least. Beyond that he would pass out of her sphere, and if she were destined to feel a pang of personal regret it was hardly that at present—he was merely the "older man," with more experience and position than the boys she usually dragged at her chariot wheels, and his homage was not self-interested as theirs might be, for he had been Private Secretary and A.D.C. to the Governor, and was not of the regiments stationed at Port Louis or Vacaos Camp. As he stood up deliberately to do her bidding, a little sleepy pleasure passed across her half-veiled eyes, as across the eyes of a purring cat.

"Where shall I find it, Mrs. Gellert?" he said, in a pleasant, assured voice that somehow carried his personality with it. If he allowed himself to play squire of dames for the time being, it was surely only by his own consent; and when he chose also he would play it no longer.

"Oh, ask the stewardess!" she said vaguely, and watched him still as he turned and walked off up the deck, a good-looking man, well-built and well-dressed, with a very fair idea of his own advantages no doubt.

Major Trelawny walked up the starboard side of the deck, and stepped into the deck-house without seeing the solitary figure of the girl still leaning on the railing. He was not even aware of Leslie Mackelt's existence, or of her presence on the boat, though he had heard his own set comment on the "handsome missionary" who was her brother. But Leslie was well aware of him, and hated him in her envy. Why should he look and walk as if the earth belonged to him, when he was so empty-headed (Leslie had never heard him speak) and a dissipated roué? (All soldiers led useless, immoral private

lives in her Methodist relations' creed.) She felt that the only comfortable attitude of mind with regard to him was one of lofty contempt, even though it stung her to know him quite unconscious of it.

"There he goes! on some errand for the May Queen, I suppose," she said to herself with bitter lips. "Her lace handkerchief—or her feather boa!" She thought of the general fluffiness which was always to be associated with Mrs. Gellert's personal appearance, and she felt she detested her own dress—a plain white linen blouse and a short dark skirt. There were no frills about Leslie—frills were frivolous, a woman's natural daintiness was almost sinful. It had been her brother's advice to her to discard underskirts on board and to wear black "cycling" knickerbockers, on account of the steep companion ladders she must ascend. Knickerbockers were decent and useful; who knew what the frill of a petticoat might not suggest to roving eyes! It was very sensible and hideous, but Leslie felt she loathed her enforced modesty in comparison to Mrs. Gellert's alluring laces.

Quite unconscious of her criticism, Major Trelawny disappeared into the deck-house, and so down to the saloon deck. He sent a steward for the stewardess, and the stewardess for a wrap, while he went into his own cabin for his field-glasses. He wanted to look at the horizon, and judge for himself the chance of a storm, for he had seen all sorts of weather round about the world, and the present conditions puzzled him. The wrap came promptly, for Mrs. Gellert was an important lady on her own deck, and proved to be a long, soft cloak of dull silk, in colour like the inside of a conch shell. The soldier threw the feminine faintly scented thing over his arm, and returned by the main companion to the upper-deck. But as he stepped out of the deck-house on to the starboard side again, he stopped and looked to the horizon with startled eyes.

It was some hours before moonrise, and indeed that phosphorescent glow in the east could never be the moon; but the unearthly light made all that side of

the world a ghastly place, and against it the railing of the ship stood out black, with the silhouette of a girl's figure facing the phenomena and as still as if paralysed. She had her back to him, and as if by instinct he found himself at her side, alone with her, they two of all on the ship looking at that extraordinary illumination.

*Even in the moment that he joined her, before the rest of the passengers could take alarm, it seemed as if something rose out of the distant sea and came sweeping down upon them. First it was a small black cloud against the livid light—then a huge wall rising up into the sky, so swiftly was it hurled across the world—and then before a shriek could burst from agonized lips it had swept onward with the same terrific force, carrying something with it in the hollow of its bosom. But for the minute that it had hung above human eyes it had looked like a great curled wave, a wall of water that would never break, but that some elemental force too awful to contemplate was driving through space. . . .

CHAPTER II

“ All alone, thou and I, in the desert—
In the land all forgotten of God,—
In the land the last raised from the ocean,
The land where no footsteps have trod.
In the land where the lost pioneer
Lies stricken in heart as in head,
In the land where his bones lie, sand-buried,
The land of the dead.”

HENRY KINGSLEY.

THE man raised himself, and stared about him with haggard eyes. He was conscious of but two elementary emotions—pain and the desire for food and drink ; and had it not been for the torture of his burning throat, the cry of life to be nourished, he would have yielded to the aching body that only wanted rest and to be left where it was. Driven by his thirst and hunger—for hunger was the secondary craving—he made a wild effort and forced himself almost to his knees, but only to fall back and lie as before, face downwards, his arms outstretched as he had thrown them in some remote instant, to save himself.

He lay still for a time as if exhausted, wondering dimly if that struggle had been his last. Then the instinct for life reasserted itself, and he tried again, with the same result. His body was a mass of bruises, and it seemed as if existence had been only just *not* beaten out of him. Yet with every fresh effort the life stirred more in his languid veins, and fear and rage made him struggle against his own weakness. It appeared to him as if he tried again and again before he found himself on his feet, staggering a few steps without aim or object, clutching at things to save himself, and then swaying as he stood erect, his hands grasping the huge crown of a fallen coco-nut palm that lay along the sand before him.

10 THE UNOFFICIAL HONEYMOON

After a minute he saw that the coco-nut had been his bed and saviour, for how long he could not tell. But whatever force had flung him face downwards into its crown of palm leaves, had broken his fall by the uprooted tree and left them stranded there together, on the sand. It was the resistance of the wiry crown that had saved his body from being broken like eggshell, and had interposed between him and the flattened earth. He still clung to the widespread palms, like a child to its mother's hands, as he looked about him.

The sand sloped up gently, until it reached a fringe of vegetation, and became lost in the green. On either side of the fallen coco-nut and the lonely man low cliffs, half covered in the same green growth, ran back along the coastline, out of sight ; and he noted, half unconsciously, that there were hollows and dark holes in their white surface, that might mean caves and shelter. Immediately in front of him—for he stood with his back to the sea, the noise of which he shuddered to hear behind him—the land dipped to a small ravine, and it seemed as if some devastating army had lately passed up the gorge from the torn and shattered aspect of its wild green growth. Not only the coco-nut palm lay uprooted on the sand, but the vines and creepers that trailed over the bush-growth had been torn and rent aside, broken boughs hung forlornly from the larger trees or were abruptly torn off, and here and there in the dense greenery it looked as if Something had actually ripped a way and showed the dark veining of rock and earth beneath—yawning seams, from which the kindly drapery of leaves was torn back.

But the man's dizzy brain was too bewildered to assign any cause for the extraordinary devastation of the valley, the which he only noticed vaguely. What caught his eye with instinctive hope was the bright twinkle of water, trickling out of the green fringe to the land, and actually slipping away through the sand to lose itself in the sea. Owing to the course of the stream bearing to his right it had probably escaped the force of that Something that had taken a direct path and

swept the middle of the valley ; but it was not from reasoning on these or any lines that he limped away in its direction, and crawling up through dense masses of creeper and bush found that it narrowed and deepened inland, and ran with unexpected depth and strength, before spreading and wasting on the shallow shore. Though so deeply overhung with vegetation, it had worn its way with the fury of a small river, and here and there reflected the light of day in its shallows between the drooping branches.

The man threw himself down on the bank, and hollowing his hands filled them from the running stream, trembling with expectation. But his momentary fear was groundless, for the water was fresh. He drank again and again, bathing his face in the cool water, but fortunately for himself he had no vessel but his hands, and could not surfeit his greed of the liquid or his thirst might have defeated itself. For a long time, as he thought, he lay there, dabbling in the water ; but he had lost count of time, and it might have been hours or minutes. The sudden flash of a silvery fin in the shallow of the stream roused him to his other necessity, and he looked round him for food. If only he could have grasped the fish ! But he regarded that as unattainable, and raising himself once more went back to the beach to search if there might be sea-birds' eggs.

For the first time he faced the sea, and again that shudder shook his whole frame. The tide was evidently just on the turn, for the glistening white sand where he stood was divided from the water by a band of wet brown, whence the waves had retreated, and great heaps of seaweed cast up by the breakers. It was evidently a dangerous coast and a death-trap of reefs, for fifty yards from shore the smooth sea was broken into wreaths of foam, and again further off some peril that lay unseen beneath the dancing blue caught and churned it again as the tide ran out. The man stood and stared at it for a moment as if fascinated. There was nothing but the satin smooth sea for miles out to the round horizon, and nothing to break its monotony

gave the white wings of sea-birds dipping and calling sad cries that mocked the watcher. He turned abruptly, to the shore again with a gesture of despair that was like frenzy, the first realization of his utter impotence, and only the craving of hunger seemed to divert him from flinging himself down again on his face and giving way to the horror of his loneliness.

The sea-birds built their nests higher up the beach than the place where he was standing, as he presently discovered, to be out of the way of the tides. Some indeed chose the low caves and shelves of rock that he had mechanically noticed, for he found dried guano and other traces of them there. But it was not the nesting season, and he was disappointed of their eggs in his first search.

His careful survey, however, discovered something else, and filled him with a dull surprise that he had not noticed it before. Just outside the largest of the caves lay a long, dark object that at a distance he had thought was a log of wood washed up by the tide, but as he approached it he saw it to be the body of a boy, lying face downwards as he himself had done, and apparently dead. He moved towards it instinctively, then hesitated, and finally continued his hunt for the eggs ; for if it were dead it did not matter, nor was its necessity as great as his own, which threatened to overpower him. He was faint and dizzy still, and when he realized that it was hopeless to look to the sea-birds to sustain his life, his eyes filled with weak tears, and he dragged himself slowly back to his first friend the coco-nut, remembering the ripe nuts among its fallen crown of leaves. He had no obvious means of opening the nuts, and indeed he never knew exactly how he cut through the tough rind—he remembered vaguely a sharp rock on which he stabbed and pierced it, and then tearing with hands and teeth like a wild beast. But the earth yielded her fruit to the need of man, as from the creation of the world, and he fed greedily upon the sustaining white flesh of the nut, and drank the healing coco-nut water, while his strength revived.

The sun was going down across the water, and the man's first collected thought was that he was looking towards the west. The applied knowledge lifted him from the sphere of the mere animal, seeking for food, to that of reasoning humanity, and he remembered the body of the boy lying at the mouth of the cave, and went to look at it again. With languid hands he turned it on its back, noticing that it had fallen on a still softer couch than his own had been, for the cave was half full of dried seaweed flung up by some old storm, and the boy had seemingly been tossed into the entrance. The face was bruised and livid, and a long bleeding cut ran across the temple from the thick dark hair to the eyebrow, but as the man mechanically put his hand over the heart he thought it beat faintly. So this other broken fragment of humanity might not be quite dead, either! But his first thought was not relief at the chance of a companion in his desolation, but annoyance at the necessity for finding and giving nourishment if the body were to be brought back to life. It showed not the least sign of vitality save those faint heart-beats that might even now have stopped, and he could see no breath issuing from its parted lips. He fetched water from the stream, however, with lagging weariness, sighing as he laboured, and let it fall from his hands on the bruised face, for he had no other way of bathing it. After a time he contrived to break another coco-nut, and tried to pour the milky water into the boy's mouth, but it ran down the unresponsive lips until he regretted wasting it and ate the nut himself. Now that he was somewhat satisfied of his hunger the man was conscious of a more healthy tire; and longed intensely to stretch himself and sleep. It seemed hopeless to try to revive the dying boy, and he decided indifferently to leave him, and when the breath at last left the body to fling it into the sea. He dragged it into the cave, however, before he lay down himself, and having bestowed it in shelter he flung himself down also on the seaweed and fell deeply asleep.

* * * * *

When the man awoke it was sunrise, for the first golden rays had shot over the wooded slopes of the Island, which rose gradually to some unknown inland height, and were dancing across the smooth sea, tinging the treacherous wreaths of foam above the reefs with red. A sense of exultation was on him as he stretched himself and opened his eyes, to be followed immediately by as swift a depression as he began to remember where he was. The pure fresh morning air, however, had roused him as much as the daylight, and he was very hungry. He stood up, feeling stiff and numbed, but no longer the dazed, battered creature of yesterday, and his brain began to work in more accustomed grooves, though his necessities were still elementary. He must have food and drink, and give his body a chance to recover its normal power and health ; but because he was a man and no longer an animal he remembered his neglect of his fellow-sufferer the night before, and a little feeling of shame made him hurry towards the body, which still lay as he had placed it. Hardly waiting to ascertain if it were still breathing, he made his way towards the stream to bring such succour as his bare hands could hold, and then he noticed something he had missed before—a wild lemon growing close to the shore, and bearing ripe fruit. He broke it eagerly and was returning to the cave when for the first time it occurred to him to think how he was dressed. There were no shoes on his feet he knew, for even the little climbing and walking of yesterday had hurt them, and indeed had begun to wear away the silk socks he still wore ; his body was covered with a fine linen shirt, and a pair of dark cloth trousers, curiously discoloured and torn to the knees. He had no coat, but one sleeve and a fragment of the collar still hung, sodden, from his right shoulder, and twined round the only button there was a curious streamer of pink silk, the colour of the inside of a conch shell. He wondered vaguely how it had got there, and how he had been dressed, for the only thing about him that had escaped damage, and indeed protected his shirt, was the low-cut evening waistcoat

still buttoned about his body. The close-fitting thing had offered no resistance to the force that had flung him down with the coco-nut palm, and so had not been injured save for the same salt damp that seemed to have drenched him through and through. He put his hand up to his neck and found neither collar nor tie ; but when he felt in the pockets of the waistcoat he uttered a low cry of joy—the first actual sound he had made. In one of them was a small pocket-knife, a little rusted with the same salt damp, but uninjured, and in moving his arm he realized what had kept even a fragment of his coat upon him. It was the strap of his field-glasses and the glasses themselves were still in the case, though the latter was battered out of shape and the leather almost cut through. He managed to extract the glasses, and looked at them. They were quite hopeless for sight, but one of the lenses had escaped being broken, and would act as a burning-glass could he unscrew it. No other possessions could have been so precious to the man at that moment. He set off at a run for the cave, and having cut one of the wild lemons with his knife, proceeded to squeeze the juice between the boy's set, parted lips ; but though he thought he swallowed he could not be sure, and forgetting his own hunger he sat and watched the lifeless body in growing fear and disappointment.

After a while it occurred to him to strip off the wet clothes and chafe the boy's limbs in the hope of recovering animation. These clothes consisted in a torn white shirt and dark knickerbockers, with coarse stockings but no shoes ; but when the man unbuttoned the linen to rub his faintly beating heart he was amazed to see that the slight, swelling breasts were those of a woman. It hardly reached his comprehension, so entirely was he satisfied that his companion in misfortune was a boy, and he stared as if troubled at the slender limbs and cropped hair ; then, indifferent again, proceeded with his ministrations as if the thing before him had neither sex nor humanity. After a time it seemed to him that the beating of the heart quickened, and

covering the naked body in the harsh warm seaweed he went off to find his own breakfast, spreading the boy's wet clothes (for he still thought of her as a boy in his dulled condition) on the rocks, to dry in the bright sunshine.

He pulled off the rough fibre and cut a hole in the coco-nuts with his knife this time, losing none of the milky water, and eating the nut afterwards. Then it occurred to him to dry such clothes as he had himself, with his companion's, and having spread them carefully above the sea-line on the beach he walked down to the rocky pools and waded in knee-deep, looking again for food. The fish were singularly bold, and he thought might be easily caught with simple tackle could he contrive it. It was the taking of the first that taxed his ingenuity, and it seemed to him hours before his patience was rewarded, and he literally pulled a fish out of one of the pools where it had become a prisoner until the tide should turn, and waded back to the beach with it flapping and struggling. It was not a variety that he knew well, but his sojourns in southern hemispheres made it not entirely unknown—a strange-looking thing it seemed, when it lay dead in the bright sunshine, its fins still gleaming a bright green, its head sunk in its globular body, and its tail nearly the same. It was, in fact, an old seacock that had been prowling about the pool in search of the little crabs and insects on which it lived, and certainly never dreamt of so strange an apparition as the naked fisherman who had no weapons but his hands.

The man carried his prize as carefully as if it had been a holy thing, and laid it on a little shelf of rock inside the cave. The walls of the cave were full of smaller holes that served him for cupboards, as well as the sea-birds for nests, and finding that his waistcoat had dried he carefully folded and laid away that one whole garment, in case of some necessity he could not foresee, and dressed himself in the silk vest, shirt, and trousers, rolling the torn edges up to his knees and leaving his legs bare. Then he proceeded to collect such materials as he

thought would burn—trash from the palms, dried grass and ferns, some wood that was not too green—and unscrewing the lens from his broken glasses focused it to the sun's rays and waited breathlessly for the driest trash to catch. The burning-glass acted better and more easily than he had hoped and before long the fire that seemed a miracle was crackling merrily outside the cave, and being fed by more rubbish. He had no means of boiling water from the stream to cook his fish, which would have suited him best as he wished to preserve the bones carefully, but he fetched clay from the stream and tightly packing the fish in that he placed it in the ashes of his fire, without attempting to clean it, and baked it whole as he had seen chickens done in other lands. The smell of the cooked food, when he carefully broke the clay away, made his mouth water ; he ate ravenously—then, with a pang, set aside a small portion of the fish, in case his patient should be able to swallow. But the self-denial was as sharp as a knife, and he dared not look at the food he was reserving.

When he returned towards the cave the sun was high overhead, so that he judged it noon. He had left the boy, as he still called him in his own mind, in the recesses of the cave, and his heart seemed to spring into his throat when he saw that he had moved. He had crawled to the entrance, as if in search of air, and was lying half buried in seaweed, the white flesh showing through the dried black weed. The man ran forward and dropped on his knees, but the eyes were still closed and the body lay inert on its side. Again he chafed it anxiously, and fetched water and fruit, the desire that it should live and save him from the horror of loneliness being no more an instinct but a frenzied prayer. He had the satisfaction at last of seeing it swallow, and the eyelids flickered and opened, the eyes beneath staring at him as if he were stranger and more terrible than death itself. But in that moment of a soul's awakening he was conscious of some extraordinary expression dawning in the whole face—recognition, a

flicker almost of pleasure—that was gone even as he puzzled over it.

Without words still—how could words be spoken to such eyes!—he gathered the body up in his arms and found that his strength enabled him to lift it easily. He carried it into the cave again, out of the heat of the noonday sun, and laid it down carefully near the entrance that it might have the warm and healing air. Then he covered it with its own dried clothes, and sitting down beside it broke fragments of the cooked fish and fed it. Its dim eyes never stirred from his face; but it began to eat, at first reluctantly, then ravenously as he himself had done. He sat there nursing and nourishing as some savage mother might her helpless, new-born child, until it fell asleep. And then he watched it still, close at its side, with the instinct of humanity to cling to humanity—they two waifs of all the world, alone in the midst of the uninhabited, friendless seas.

* * * * *

Another night, and another day. To search for food, but with more confidence, the making of the fire to cook the wild things bereft of existence that man might live. In two days it seemed that certain acts became a habit. The man roamed rather further afield, and returned with his spoils to sustain his own strength and that feeble vitality that was still at the elementary stage of eating and sleeping. He watched and waited for the wavering spark of life to recover itself, and in the meantime his own mind and body healed. He had passed from an animal back into a man, and so reclaimed his personality. For on the evening of the fourth day he found himself standing upright on the shore, facing the sunset, though how he came there he did not know, and saying out loud, “I am Miles Tre-lawny of the Carbines—Major Tre-lawny—Miles Tre-lawny!” as if he feared to lose it again.

And then, suddenly, to the relentless sea and sky and the desolate land, “Oh, God!—Oh, God!—Oh, God!”

CHAPTER III

" Somewhere in shuddering, wind-swept space,—
In shadowland, in no-man's land,—
Two hurrying forms met face to face
And bade each other stand.

" ' And who are you ? ' asked one agape,
Shivering in the gloaming light.
' I know not,' said the other shape,
' I only died last night.' "

T. B. ALDRITCH.

THE girl's recovery was necessarily slower than the man's. For some days after his return to consciousness, and the regaining of his personality, she remained a mere bodily presence, eating and sleeping, but as if all her other faculties were stunned. That her body was a mass of bruises he knew, and that her limbs must ache and stiffen he could see from the slowness of her movements and the gradual way in which she began to use them. It seemed such a miracle that life had survived in her at all—even more so than in himself—that he felt no surprise, and hardly any impatience during the first days through which he tended her, asking nothing of her but that she should eat and sleep, and look at him with human eyes. It was the silence that frightened him, and the loneliness that was becoming a nightmare since his senses swung him back into desire of touch with the civilized world. He longed for her to speak, to develop enough interest in their mutual situation to join him in his frantic desire to escape from it. But for a time she showed no sign of such a thing, and her brain did not appear to make any effort to rise above the mere natural needs of existence.

Her first realization of her surroundings, as she told him long afterwards, came through a sense of healing

20 THE UNOFFICIAL HONEYMOON

in the airs that blew on her, both from sea and land. They were so soft and balmy, yet so dry and bracing, that they cured body and brain alike, and were both medicine and nourishment. The cuts on her face and head healed with remarkable rapidity, and her first impulse had been to crawl to the mouth of the cave to breathe the wonderful curative properties in the atmosphere. They came to the conclusion, later, that the Island on which they found themselves was extraordinarily favourable to human life in its climatic conditions, and that the rarity of the air was greatly stimulating to vitality. The influence of the sun was probably responsible for destroying all possible germs of disease, the rays being unweakened by damp or vapour, of which there seemed singularly little. Even the nights were dry and clear at that season of the year, and the air was so charged with ozone that it was literally as strong as wine.

After a few days the girl became dully conscious of a rough routine that went on round her as certainly as the rising and setting of the sun, and the ebb and flow of the tide at which she stared with half-seeing eyes. The world had never been quite empty for her as for the man during that period before he discovered her to be alive. In her first coming back to life she had opened her eyes on another human entity that had served her and nourished her, and it resolved itself into as familiar a part of the landscape as the cliff-line jutting out into the blue sea and cutting short the round horizon, or the strip of silver-white sand to be seen from the entrance to the cave. This familiar figure, in ragged shirt and trousers and with unshaven face, passed across her vision, bringing food and water at first, raising her that she might eat, and bathing her face and hands. Sometimes it vanished out of her sight, but always to return with food ; sometimes she watched it making a fire and cooking the food she afterwards ate with returning appetite. As she grew better she dressed herself mechanically in the clothes with which he had covered her, and crept listlessly to the stream to drink or to

wash herself ; but it did not occur to her to try to help in the finding or preparing of food until a day when he suddenly spoke, and the sound of a human voice shocked her back into a fresh consciousness. He had been away for some hours, and returned to find her sitting on the seaweed at the entrance to the cave, leaning against the flat rock, in her invariable attitude when not asleep. She turned her heavy eyes from the monotonous blue of the sea to the man, because his appearance, as a rule, meant the satisfying of her hunger—just so would a wild animal in a cage look at its keeper. The man seemed weary, but he carried two fish in his hands besides the curious tackle with which he caught them, and at which she had hardly cared to look as yet. As a rule he went straight to the pile of wood and palm trash he had collected earlier, and throwing himself face downwards beside it moved something in his hands that glittered in the sun until a thin smoke began to rise. But this time he came over the sand to the seaweed where she was sitting, and spoke :

"Are you well enough to come and help me, Tommy ?" he said.

The shock of the human voice and its unexpected question made her shiver. She shook her head querulously, and half turned her back to him, leaning her head against the rough rock. Why should he make this demand of her, dragging her back to association with material things, and the realization of her surroundings which she dreaded ! She had come reluctantly enough from death back to life. Now this demand upon her new vitality roused her to sullen resistance.

He stood looking down on her for a moment, helplessly. Then he went back to his pile of unlighted wood, and his usual ministrations, while the girl sat still, glad to be let alone. But after a time it struck her new consciousness that she was hungry, and that she was not being fed as usual though the smell of food was in her nostrils. She turned round slowly, and saw that

the man was eagerly devouring his supper as she had seen him do often before—but while, or after, she had had her share—and her brain made a new effort at indignation. He had cooked his food, and was eating it out of a rough bowl made of a calabash gourd, sitting on a ledge of rock from which he had stripped the over-hanging creepers to make a natural seat. To serve his food he had a wooden fork, two-pronged, and a spoon clumsily hollowed out. She remembered seeing him laboriously fashion them from a piece of wood, with a penknife which he handled as if it were something very precious.

The man went on eating voraciously, and took no notice of the girl, even when she approached him. She stumbled a little when she reached the rocks where he was sitting, and just beyond which he made his fire where the hard sand and the vegetation fought for possession of the earth ; but there being no one to help her she steadied herself, and reached his side.

“ Give me some ! ” she said hoarsely, pointing with an elementary impulse at the food, and then choked and gasped at the sound of her own voice in the stillness.

He pointed to a portion of the fish which he had set aside in another calabash, indicating that she could have it. The girl looked at it helplessly, and then at the man, emptying his own bowl with hungry haste. A new thought formed itself in her stagnant brain—the fear that having eaten his own portion he might desire hers and repent of having given it to her. She snatched the calabash hastily, and sitting down near him began to eat with her fingers as he did not offer her the spoon and fork he had made for himself. She noticed while eating that he had yet another broken gourd filled with water, and from this he drank when he had finished the fish. In her turn she stretched out her hand for it.

“ Water ! ” she said eagerly, but he turned it upside down to show that it was empty, pouring the last bright drops on the rocks.

“ Go and fill it for yourself ! ” he said, and then,

meeting her piteous eyes, he added: " You must do your share."

She took the calabash meekly enough, though her face flushed with resentment. He was forcing her back into life and its action, and she wanted to lie down and die—if she could do so without the struggle between life and death—the more she realized the position. But life being stronger than resignation to its passing, she filled the gourd at the stream, from which she had already drunk on occasions when he was absent fishing, and quenched her thirst. Then she carried the gourd back to him and laid it down, sullenly submissive.

" I am going to teach you to light the fire to-morrow," he said, assuming a right of command over her in their mutual necessity. " And then I will tell you my plans. Can you begin to think again ? " He was able to judge her clouded brain from his own, and to treat her with justice and leniency even while he demanded fair play.

" Yes ! " she said, and the eyes that looked up at him were the eyes of a creature to its master—for the present.

" Very well. We will ,not talk of how we came here yet—I can't focus that either"—he shuddered even through his stronger frame, and the girl put her hands over her eyes with a sharp cry. " But since we are here," he went on hastily, " we must have food and shelter, until we can—we can plan to—rescue ourselves. I will show you how to fish by and by. I made a line with the fibre of a creeper and a hook out of a fish-bone, but the fish here won't take bait. So now I've used the fibre for a kind of net, and I'm going to fish when it's dark—they simply crowd after a light, and you scoop them up. That's my net"—he glanced at the strange tackle lying beside him on the rock with a pride that bewildered her. She was not yet come to the absorbing interest of ways and means, and had hardly followed his explanation. " Can you cook ? " he asked.

“Yes.”

“We can’t boil the fish yet, unless I can manage to bake some clay vessels hard enough. Then we could drop a red-hot stone into the water and heat it that way. I’ve seen it done by certain tribes. I cook mostly among the ashes at present, and use those big stones for an oven.” He pointed to some large pieces of granite that he had selected as of a general size, and which formed the centre of his fire. “I made a great discovery to-day,” he said—it was noticeable that he did all the talking, while as yet she could only listen. “I found a bread-fruit tree. There are none ripe yet, but in a day or so we shall be able to get some and roast it. Have you eaten bread-fruit ?

“We could live on that alone if necessary. The difficulty is to prepare it, as I do not want to wear the edge of my knife too much—it is the most precious thing we have, except the lens of my field-glasses. But I will find you a sharp shell and you can scrape the bread-fruit, and then we can break it open as I managed to do the coco-nuts at first. As long as we have bread-fruit and coco-nuts and fish we can’t starve, even if I find nothing else, which I hope to do further inland.”

“Yes.”

“Then you can gather the dry grass and palm trash to feed the fire, and the seaweed to make our beds. I have scraped out two bed-places in the sand, inside the cave, and if we fill them with dry seaweed we shall be more comfortable. Do you see that pile of wood up there on the cliff ? ”

She followed his pointing finger, and saw a dark heap on the highest of the low cliffs running beyond her sight into the blue ring of sea. She stared at it stupidly, for it presented nothing to her mind but a dark object without any meaning.

“Do you see it ? ” he said impatiently.

She nodded.

“You had better try to talk,” he warned her ; “it will bring your brain into working order again. I talked to the sky and the sea at first, while you were lying there

unconscious. That was one of the things I was afraid of"—his voice dropped, and he spoke softly, with an abject terror she could not yet understand. "I was afraid of losing my speech—of forgetting how!"

The girl, who did not want to speak, or value the power as yet, looked at him coldly yet half curiously. But for the time being he was her master, and because he bade her she made an effort and used her voice.

"I do not see the use of—that!" she said slowly, pointing to the pile on the cliff. "What is it for? Is it—another fire?"

"It is for a beacon," he said more briskly, and the colour deepened in his burnt face with a new excitement. "It is our one chance, at present. Later, I may think of something better. It is a pile of dry wood that I have been collecting, with a lot of palm trash and bamboo leaves. At any time we can set a light to it if we see a ship, never mind how far off. It is not a very big pile yet, but we can both go on adding to it day by day."

She pondered for a minute, and then as one who sees her task before her she answered him grudgingly.

"You mean that—I am to look for anything that will burn—while you are—fishing?"

"Yes—while I am away getting food of any kind. You must add to the pile, and watch the seas for a sail, and set light to the beacon if I am not here—I shall leave you the burning-glass, but you must be as careful with it as with your own soul! Perhaps it would be almost better to bank the fire we cook by with damp moss and keep it smouldering," he added anxiously. Evidently he doubted her fitness to be trusted with the precious lens. "You can be quite useful to me, Tommy, though you can't do much hard work."

For a minute when he spoke of her care for her soul, an increase of expression crossed the girl's face. She drew back her head as if he had struck her, and there was faint reproof in her uplifted eyes. But his choice of a name for her did not seem to trouble her at all, and she answered to it as indifferently as she obeyed him for some time to come. Though he knew her to be a woman,

indeed, he had so accustomed himself to look upon her as a boy that he hardly regarded her as anything else, and her boyish appearance kept up the impression. In her limp linen shirt or blouse, and her dark knicker-bockers, she looked totally unfeminine to his eyes, and her rough dark hair was only long enough to appear untidy. If there was a feminine trait about her it lay in the expression looking out of her melancholy brown eyes ; but their mutual misfortune made such a sadness a perfectly natural thing to his cursory glance. He was not at all concerned with the soul of this creature who alone in all the world companioned him, but it was of material importance that she should be able to cook their food and do the lighter part of the work. They agreed that it was better to go barefoot, since in time that must become a necessity, neither of them having shoes, and when the girl's tender skin had somewhat hardened she could clamber about the rocks and tramp it through the rough bush as well as the man. She learned to fish, but was less successful at procuring food than at dressing it, and he usually did the hunting and left her to the preparing of their meals. It had not occurred to him to toast the fish or the young birds he sometimes caught ; but with a rough arrangement of two sticks thrust into the ground and the fibre of a giant creeper stretched across as a line, she managed to suspend and turn their supper so that it became a more appetizing dish. The bread-fruit they baked in the ashes, or among the big stones as an oven, and the coco-nuts needed no art to make them appetizing. If the food was monotonous it was not more so than the life, which in a few weeks' time threatened their peace through its maddening sameness, for they grew querulous with each other, and intolerant of the least weakness or fault—as, for instance, on a day when the girl blunted the larger blade of the precious knife and nearly snapped it in cutting a coco-nut. When she admitted what she had done the man was in a sudden fury.

“ I told you never to use the knife for anything for which it could be spared ! ” he cried, standing over her

with flashing eyes. "You should have used a sharp shell, and broken it with your hands afterwards."

"It's so hard!" muttered the girl resentfully. "I was afraid of losing the water——"

"There are more coco-nuts to grow and ripen, even if you did, you little fool!" he said roughly. "And we have only the one knife—that won't grow again! It's your idleness, and your desire to spare yourself trouble—I can't trust you with anything."

"You used it to skin a bird the other day!" said the girl sullenly. "I don't see why you should have all the easy work—taking the few things we have to help yourself! I have had to keep the fire banked up and smouldering the last day or so because you hid the glass away somewhere and I couldn't relight it!"

"It's because I can't trust you with anything, unless I'm here to overlook you!" repeated the man, exasperated, and seizing her by her slight shoulders he shook her as a big dog might a kitten. "If you ever dare to be careless again I'll leave you to starve!" he said furiously, and dropped her in a little heap on the hard sand.

She sat cowering where he had left her for a while, and her eyes gleamed in her white face like some wild animal's maddened to attack. It was true what he said, that without him she might starve, for though she could catch fish it was only with his net, or the sharp wooden spear he had made—though she could cut coco-nuts and cook bread-fruit it was only when he had climbed trees to obtain them. She would have been reduced to eating fruit, and even to find that she would have had to penetrate into the bush. But she felt hot and sore with her resentment, and looked about stealthily to see by what means she could do him an injury. The great pile of brushwood on the cliffs overhead attracted her eye, his one hope of rescue, the beacon he tended and fed so hungrily. She rose with caution from her crouching position, and crept up the sand and over the boulders to the spot where it towered above her, for their mutual efforts had raised it from a small pile into a large one,

and neither rain nor wind-storm had occurred to scatter it. It was composed of large branches of trees such as the man could collect or break off with his hands and dry in the sun, with smaller twigs to act as matchwood, dried fern, and palm trash—anything that would burn, as he said. She sheltered herself from sight behind the imposing pile, and kneeling down began to pull at the lower, heavier wood, meaning to throw it over the cliff where it would be carried away by the incoming tide. The stack was too compact to yield to her first effort, but she tugged savagely, biting her lips, and all the while picturing the man's heat of anger when he should discover what she had done. She shivered to think of the look on his face and the possible consequences to herself. She had felt like a pygmy in his grasp. And yet she wanted to make him angry, to hurt and injure him so that he should be as blind with passion as she was herself. She redoubled her efforts and felt the foundation of the pile loosen.

Suddenly she heard his voice behind her. He had been seeking her, and had discovered her in the very act of her revenge. She dropped her little fierce hands into her lap, and knelt before him, a panting creature, expectant of his wrath.

"Were you hiding from me?" he said, and in an amazed fashion she recognized that there was shame in his voice. "You—you mustn't be afraid—I forgot myself—it's this cursed loneliness—the life—I lose all sense of being a man."

He hesitated, confused, and she realized that he had not known what she was doing. He merely thought that she had fled from him, and taken refuge behind the pile of brushwood.

"Look here, Tommy, I'm sorry!" he said awkwardly, and his hand fell on the rough dark head in a kind of caress—he might have touched his dog so, after chastisement. "I forgot myself!" he said.

She looked up, and saw his face transfigured by the evening light, but with something in it that had not been there a minute since—the same look that had come upon

it when he re-found his personality, only that she did not know. She stared with a vague wonderment to find more nobility in him than in herself, for with a returning recollection of things taught her she had somehow thought that she was the better of the two—that she must be so, according to the past lives that they had lived.

"What is your name?" he said gently. "We will at least try to remember that we are human beings—we will not snarl and quarrel like animals."

"I am Leslie Mackelt," she said curtly, and rose from her knees to follow him back to the cave. She did not tell him of the wicked purpose that she left behind by the beacon pile, but she hung her head and was more strangely silent than ever for a day or so. The man let her alone to recover confidence in him. He reproached himself for his harshness, thinking her cowed. But it was, in fact, his generosity that tamed her.

CHAPTER IV

" As I came through the desert thus it was—
As I came through the desert ; I was twain,
Two selves distinct that cannot join again ;
One stood apart and knew but could not stir,
And watched the other stark in swoon, and her ;
And she came on and never turned aside,
Between each sun and moon and roaring tide :
 And as she came more near
 My soul grew mad with fear."

JAMES THOMPSON.

THE Island lay in unknown latitudes, for Trelawny's very limited knowledge of scientific geography did not allow him to place it with any certainty. It was probably one of those scattered units of the Gilbert or Phoenix Groups, he thought, uninhabited and probably uncharted because too small to make cultivation lucrative. On the other hand, its climate was unlike any that he had ever sampled in equatorial regions, being extraordinarily healthy, and though there were no evidences of a very dry season the rain that fell, mostly in the night, was lacking in tropical force. His only explanation of the phenomenon was that the *Aristo* must have been carried far out of her course by the same disturbance that had flung him and his companion on a scrap of land that for all he knew might be somewhere as much further out of his calculations.

The country rose gradually on all sides from the strip of beach and the caves where the two castaways had practically established themselves ; but while behind the caves it swept upward some distance due east, on the north it rose more abruptly to a swelling grassy plain that crowned the low cliffs and was more accessible than the dense bush to the south. Trelawny had

early climbed to the top of this ascent, as being less difficult than the others, and about half a mile inland found that he had reached as high a point as any in the islet—for it was little more—and could catch a glimpse of the blue sea that ringed him in all round the horizon. Below him, on the north-east, ran that extraordinary seam, like the track of a storm, that he had noticed on first regaining consciousness, and which was finally lost from his sight in a dip between two hills. But he could see sufficient of the coast to judge that a further reason for the Island being uninhabited lay in the extreme difficulty of landing. On the north coast were precipitous cliffs guarded by he knew not what dangers of hidden rocks, and on the west was the dangerous reef which extended far along the south side. The thickest of the forest land lay towards the south, whose bays and inlets were in consequence somewhat hidden from him by its deep fringes of vegetation ; but enough of the general outline was visible to satisfy him as to its geography.

His hunting expeditions usually took him north-east, in the seam or furrow that he began to call the Gorge, for the rift it had made in the vegetation caused a natural pathway, if a very rough one. The Island must have been volcanic in its origin, he concluded, and not—as he at first supposed from the reefs—one of a coral group. He infinitely regretted that his experience round about the world, and through his profession, had not made him more skilful in turning wild nature to his own account, and lamented to the girl :

“ If I had only been a Navy man, or even a beastly Sapper, I could have found a use for half the things that floor me, and made our rescue more likely, Tommy ! ” he said. Even though he knew her name he still called her Tommy, and treated her much as a delicate boy who must be worked carefully, but by no means allowed to shirk.

“ I think you are wonderful anyway,” said the girl honestly. “ I should never have thought of using those creepers for rope-fibre, and fishing nets, and things ! ”

"Oh, that's nothing—simply a necessity. You want a net, and you look round for something to make it of, that's all. I found out about the fish coming to a light by a fluke. I went down to the stream one night to get some water, and as there was no moon I took a bunch of dried ferns, half alight, for a torch. By Jove! you should have seen the beggars swarm round! The water was thick with fish, all gaping and half dazed. I saw that if they would do that in the stream they would in the rock-pools. Of course, it's an old poacher's trick."

"I do hate spearing them though!" said the girl with a little fastidious shudder. "And the wood isn't really sharp enough—ugh!"

"Stick to the net then. These creepers are invaluable. But there's some way of plaiting bark that I don't know, though I must have seen natives doing it. Soldier-men are not taught to do anything outside their profession, and somehow we don't learn anything for ourselves—except sport. I can use a gun, but unfortunately I haven't got one."

"If you would get me some fibre or bark I think I could plait things—hats and baskets, I mean," said the girl a little hesitatingly. She was never in haste to offer her services, and was rather ready to think she had done more than her share. But she could not let him be the more generous or willing. The virtues still seemed to her to be her prerogative.

"Could you?"—He looked at her a little curiously, perhaps doubting her skill, perhaps wondering why she had not tried before. "I'll get you the fibre fast enough. They don't teach us to make hats in the Army! By the way, I don't think I ever explained to you who I am, or told you my name, though I asked yours. I am Miles Trelawny, a Major in the Carabiners."

"Yes, I know," said the girl, in the old curt fashion.

"How do you know?" he asked in some surprise. He wondered if he could have talked in his sleep, or raved of his former life in some semi-delirium—he dreamed of it often enough, God knew!

"I was on the *Aristo* too," said the girl.

"Oh, I see!" He looked at her for a moment as if about to say more, but checked himself. He had been going to say, "I never saw you, then," but it occurred to him that she might have been in the second or third class, and he avoided the explanation from her, instinctively. In any case she never called him by a name, and their intercourse had hardly increased for all the enforced intimacy during the first weeks of their life in the Island. Each had enough hard work in the day to secure food and to try to increase their mutual comfort, which prevented their coming much in contact, and at night they were tired and went naturally to rest. It was too hot to work in the middle of the day, and so wherever they might be—and sometimes the man was a mile or so inland—they rested till the sun began to lose his power. But whenever their immediate tasks were over it was one or the other's duty to add to the beacon, and to collect wood and trash and build it yet higher and larger. Every night the man covered it as well as possible with the dried seaweed which was easily obtainable in the little bays and inlets of the coast, for it seemed that the sea had thrown up an inexhaustible supply; and this protection saved the wood somewhat from both rain and dews, as well as did the shade from some coco-nut palms under which he had first laid it. Tending the beacon was the one task at which the girl worked doggedly, for she was spurred by unspoken remorse at the memory of how nearly she had destroyed it.

The large cave in which Trelawny had originally tended his companion was somewhat low, and ran inwards at a gentle slope until at the furthest recess a man could not stand upright. But on the left of the entrance, towards the back, a large hole gave entrance to a further cave, which had no available opening on the seaboard, but a long narrow shelf like a chimney ran up to the plateau of cliff land above, and was not so overgrown with grasses but that it was fed with fresh air night and day. In this further cave the girl

had soon made her own bed of seaweed in a natural hollow of the rock, and slept there by tacit agreement. She had to scramble through into her sleeping-place, but she was slight and fairly active, and soon grew to know the position of every stone and ledge of rock, though there was little light. The man would have had some difficulty in climbing through, and kept his own bed of seaweed in the outer cave, in sight of the western sea and the unlighted beacon towering darkly against the tropical sky which might be brightened from horizon to horizon by a full white moon or blazing with stars. Some restless fear of leaving this one hope of rescue seemed to grow on him as the days passed, rather than his becoming reconciled to his lot. Once or twice the girl, lying in the inner cave, heard him rise up from sleep and move out to the beach, where, as she guessed, he paced up and down. But by day they hardly spoke of the hope of a sail which was in both their minds, and as yet they had not referred to the strange Terror that brought them there.

Some weeks must have passed before the man thought of recording the passing of time by a rough diary, and by that time he could only guess the month of November to be drawing to its close. The walls of the cave were fairly smooth slabs of rock breaking out one over the other into a moderate-sized dome, and on one of the furthest slabs, safe from storms and weather, he scratched a rough N with his knife, and added the number 25, that being, as far as he could calculate, the date. Every night he added another number until the month was done, and then began again with D for December. By this means he could judge better of the seasons and the food they might expect to find, and, according to his slight knowledge of latitude, in what directions he might set his forlorn hope of a sail.

It began to obsess him, that slight chance of rescue, with the increasing monotony of the life. Day by day he saw the first beams of sun touching the distant horizon from over the crown of the hills that rose behind the cave, and the shortening shadow of the land drawn back

along the sea. Day after day he rose with the hope of morning in him, and went down to the sea to bathe, drying himself in the sun before the beams grew too fierce ; and as the hours rolled slowly on to the golden glare of noon the hope grew more desperate as it receded from him. Day after day he worked doggedly to make himself too tired to think, for the realization of his position was like a black fiend driving him before it, and too awful to be met face to face. Then, when the light grew lower and he knew it was time to return and fish for the evening meal, he would suddenly be taken by panic fear that he had missed some solitary ship that had come within hail and passed, not knowing of his extremity, and never to return. And he would run, stumbling, back to the cave and the shore, always to find the unlit beacon and the girl, sullenly silent at her task of making a fire to cook such food as he would provide. The evenings were becoming a torture, and his sleep was broken by a nightmare of something passing—always passing—across the horizon, that he might not reach. It was then that he rose, as the girl heard him, and walked upon the beach, clenching his teeth, opening and shutting his hands, muttering to himself, praying for his reason.

The loneliness of it ! the loneliness ! There is no space so vast and tenantless as that of a little island ringed around with unbroken seas. The land spaces, however vast, are at least to be reckoned by miles, though they be in the heart of the vastest continent. So far off—thousands of miles it may be—there is civilization, habitations of other men, that thought goes out to reach. But here, in the unknown seas, one might race for ever and ever and never find another shore.

“ And though thy thought stretch leagues and leagues beyond,
Still leagues beyond those leagues there is more sea ! ”

It cowed him. He did not dare to think of it at last—hardly even to look at it. As at first the terror of the strange horror that brought him there had made him shun the sea, so after a time he feared to think of it

even as the road back to safer lands, and worked his way always inland, turning his back to the mocking glimpse of bright blue which every acclivity showed him. And still the silence, and the sweetness, and the longing, went on from day to day in unbroken monotony.

It was in his vain endeavour to escape the sea that one day he went up the Gorge to collect firewood, of which the two castaways could never have too much. Small though the island was, the formation of the hills inland was grand enough for mountain scenery. They lay fold within fold, their precipitous sides mere shelves of rock on which every green spoil of Nature that could had seized a foothold, and flung branch and tendril upwards and downward to drape the bare walls. Where the Gorge narrowed it looked like one long, green corridor, and as Trelawny climbed and pushed his way the pendulous vines above his head hung down in unbroken festoons, thirty, forty feet long, and the delicate tree-fern sprang upward from shelf and crevice to meet them ; but here and there the smaller trees had ~~been~~ uprooted, the bush flattened, by that Something that had torn whole layers of earth away from the gaping rock-bed.

It was very hot in the Gorge, for the fresh sea-breeze was shut out by the overhanging hills, and hardly penetrated the winding pass. The perspiration streamed from the man's burnt face and bare arms, but he pushed his way on doggedly, as if afraid to pause and listen. Now and then he stopped to break the smaller wood from one of the uprooted trees, already somewhat dried and withered, or a broken branch, to add to his increasing burden. Once a small snake whipped across his path, and with lightning quickness he struck at it with a rough staff he carried and broke its back. There was no fear in the movement, but a savage enjoyment that drew his lips back from his teeth and distorted his face to ugliness. As the day lengthened to evening a solitary bird call made him look up, and then, stealthily, he drew a sling from the bosom of his shirt, and waited until he could locate it. He had had some difficulty in making

that sling, and it was finally contrived from the invaluable creeper fibre, and the skin of a wild rat, which he had trapped and killed, to hold the stone. But he was growing proficient in its use, and the little pelt had become elastic in the process. The call was repeated—the evening note of the doomed thing over his head—then he had seen it, and then the stone flew out and up, and a small body whirled in air and fell with a little thud not a yard from his feet.

He picked up the limp little body and held it in his hand, looking at it curiously, as if he wondered what had happened. It was quite dead, for the blow and the fall together had knocked the life out of it at once, but the thing still felt warm in his hand. He did not know the species, but the plumage reminded him of a wagtail, and the long tail feathers increased the resemblance. He stroked it gently, shaking his head as if it had been a useless kill, though his first thought had been for food, and he had often killed birds before. They were very numerous, and save for the various gulls not large, but mostly bright-plumaged—small green parrots and a bird of paradise being the most common. He was still thinking, quite collectedly, that the bird was hardly worth taking back with him, when he was startled to hear himself talking, and he realized that his lips must have been framing speech for some minutes while his brain worked quite independently. He had had a suspicion of this before, that he sometimes talked and whispered to himself unconsciously, but the sound of it in the dense silence frightened him to madness.

“ I’ll come round after tiffin. Take the pony up to Sowerby Sahib, boy, he is playing this afternoon. . . . Sorry, Mrs. Lewes! I was in camp that week—’pon my soul I was . . . ”

That was what he was saying, and his ears tingled to listen, and his breath came short as the broken words increased. He spoke fast and garrulously for a minute, as if he had quite lost control of himself; scraps of old conversations in India, fragments of service orders, a snatch of controversy on technical subjects with a brother

officer—all things past and done with. Then a bat swooped suddenly out of some hole in the cliffs above his head, and took its flight into the evening air, startling him with its twitter. He stared round him at the dense vegetation and the lonely savage pass, and suddenly the words on his lips ended in a long, strange cry. For he was alone in the dreadful Island in the dreadful seas, though his lips had babbled brightly with comrades long passed out of his life, and he had been wandering in a past civilization—

He dropped the body of the bird, and, turning, fled for his life the way he had come. How he managed to run over the rough earth and the tangles of under-growth he never knew, for he had found it laborious and slow work coming. But he was mad with terror of the loneliness, and the fear lent sureness and strength to his feet. He was flying from death in life, and the awful aloofness of that virgin valley in the hills where no foot of man had been save his own. He struggled and scrambled and pushed his way, until at last he flung down his bundle of wood to lighten himself, and burst out of the narrow Gorge into more open land. But instead of going back to the cave he turned, with the instinct of a hunted thing, and made for the grassy plateau of the north. He could not quite face the sea—the sea that walled him in and stretched out beyond his thoughts to a receding horizon that never linked him again with man.

On the long grassy swell of the cliffs he threw himself, face downwards, his hands clutching at the earth, his body convulsed with shudders of fear, and above and around and about him the solitude became a material thing, a burden too great to be borne. With convulsed face and sobbing lips he crouched yet closer to the earth, shrinking away from it, trying to hide from it, feeling his reason no longer strong enough to struggle with it, a mere living thing crushed by the sense of its own impotence.

* * * * *

The sunset over the sea at least was beautiful, and the

girl used to like to sit in the warm lengthening light, and to suck in the beauty to her own soul. If she were early with her preparations for supper, or the man were late, she gained these minutes to herself and enjoyed the broken fragments of poetry or prose that rose like flowers in her memory to express the scene before her. It was silent joy, for she never tried to share it with her companion or discover if he had such thoughts also ; but it lulled the trouble of her brain, which was gradually recovering from the shock it had had, and regaining its balance to the altered circumstances around it. The girl went down to the wet line of sand on this evening, and sat with her hands clasped round her knees, her bare feet actually resting on the brown line where the tide was going out. The sun dazzled her brown eyes and glorified her rough hair, but she was only thinking of the colours he left on the sea and sky as he dipped rapidly to the horizon. It was flecks of blood on the white foam over the reef, and an indigo sea, opaque and polished. The sky was like the colours in mother-of-pearl, and the deep green of the palms stood out against it to the south-west. The man was late in returning, and she hoped he might be later still. She rocked her body to and fro in a kind of lullaby to her scraps of remembered poems, always beginning and ending with the great "Ode to a Nightingale" :

" Magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, round fairy lands forlorn ! "

She said it aloud, slowly, for the exquisite pleasure of its description of the scene before her.

" Perilous seas, round fairy lands forlorn ! "

And then :

" Singing, ' And shall it be over the seas
To a sweet little Eden on earth that I know ?
A mountain islet painted and peaked,
Waves on a diamond shingle dash,
Cataract brooks to the ocean run,
Fairly delicate places shine !

" ' For the bud ever breaks into bloom on the tree,
And a storm never wakes on the lonely sea.' " .

(The man was late to-night. The bread-fruit would be spoiled. And he had yet to catch fish, if he wanted some for supper. Well!—she shrugged her shoulders. She did not care. She could eat wild fruit for supper. Certainly she would not trouble to fish for him.)

“ Or I would sail upon the tropic seas,
Where fathom long the blood-red dulses grow,
Drop from the rock and waver in the breeze,
Lashing the tide to foam ; while far below,” . . .

Yes, the man was surely very late.

She rose up at last, reluctantly, as the sun dipped below the horizon in one burning line, for it would be dark very soon. The fire still smouldered round the big stones of the oven, and she stood there a moment, expecting him to come in sight, weary and irritable. But the wild dusky bush remained unbroken by sound or sight, and a little fear crept into her heart. Supposing something had happened to him, and she were left alone! She had never dwelt much upon this fear before, he had seemed so strong and so capable, so apt to take the lead and to say where he would go and at what time he would be back. She had resented the tasks he had set her, and half grudged him the adventures and explorations. But now she shivered at the idea of having to look for him at night in the dark Gorge, and every moment made it more impossible to find him. With a desperate desire to see him appear, to look over the country while it was still light enough, she climbed hastily over the rocks and up the grassy slope to northward, where they always went to survey the Island.

And there she found him, lying face downwards in the grass, speechless, because he was exhausted, but his fingers twitching still at the long tussocks. Had it not been for that movement she would have thought that he was dead; and when she fell on her knees beside him and laid her hands on his shoulders she was still afraid that he was badly hurt. Even when he raised his haggard face and glared at her she did not understand

his trouble—she only knew that something dreadful had happened to him. It was not sunstroke—she had seen sunstroke in Australia ; yet it seemed a delirium, for he began to babble hoarsely of the horror all around them, and then, burying his face on her knees as she sat beside him, he begged her to hold him, not to leave him, to come closer for God's sake !—his voice ending in a scream of terror.

What had happened to him ? What dire experience had come upon him in the Gorge ? She knew that he was mad, but she could find no cause for this sudden seizure. Only, she sat there beside him, gripping hold of his shoulders as he asked her, that he might realize her nearness, and feeling the long shudders that passed over his body, as the night fell about them, solemn and dense and silent. Sometimes he would move as if in pain, and press his seared face against her breast, but she knew that it was in his delirium, and that she was no more to him than the only other human being in the Universe. For as the night increased he whispered his horror to her, and through the broken mutterings she began to understand. He had stood face to face with utter desolation and fled from the death in life. It was only words to her, but she recognized an awful phase of their solitude that she had not yet experienced, and never loosened her clasp, for by that alone could she help him.

It was midnight, she thought, when at last she helped him to stumble to his feet and led him down to the cave, finding her way by instinct and hampered by his still clinging to her. The fire was out, and she could not rekindle it, but she persuaded him to lie down, and with his head on her knees he slept fitfully. Twice he sprang up with a cry, and she caught him back, while he whispered that he was afraid, as a child might in the dark. When the first glimmer of dawn began to lighten mysteriously over the sea she felt the dead weight of his body resting against her, and leaning down heard that his breathing was deep and regular. Very carefully she laid her hands upon his forehead and

found that it was damp ; and then, and not till then, she relaxed her tense attitude, and leaning her back against the wall of the cave tried to rest ; but she did not leave him until he turned naturally in his sleep and stretched himself on the seaweed at her side, and then with cramped and aching limbs she lay down also, trembling and watching him still. Her eyes never closed until, long after the sun was up, he stretched himself and yawned, looking up at her with sane eyes.

“ Hulhoa, Tommy ! I think I'll go down and have a bath,” he said. “ Is there any bread-fruit ? I'm hungry.”

She rose up, stiff and white, and without a word went to prepare breakfast for him.

CHAPTER V

“ The very deep did rot, O Christ,
That such a thing should be!
Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs
Upon an unknown sea.”

COLERIDGE.

“ **H**OW far up the Gorge have you been ? ” said the girl.

It was late on the following afternoon, and they were making the fire for the evening meal. They had both slept during the heat of the day and on into the cooler hours, side by side on the dried seaweed of the cave ; and wherever the man went the girl followed, watchfully. While he had been adding to the beacon and mending his net during the earlier morning she had stood within hail, her eyes sunken in her face for lack of sleep and the weariness of the strain she had undergone on finding him the night before ; but until he dropped asleep at noon she never relaxed her guard of him. He did not remark on it, though as a rule they worked far apart, nor did he suggest going further than the beacon. Perhaps he dimly felt that he was glad of her presence, though he had not referred to his brief madness, and she hardly knew if he remembered it.

“ About two miles, or two miles and a half, I think,” he said, kneeling down to focus the sun rays on the burning-glass. “ It is awfully rough, so that one can hardly judge the distance.”

“ I think we ought to explore it as far as we can,” said the girl, with a new self-assertion. She had never attempted to take the lead in such matters before.

“ The Island can’t be very large, as we can see right across it from that grassy cliff,”

“ It’s about six miles at the broadest perhaps—from

north to south. Not more than four from east to west, I should say."

"And the Gorge leads east?"

"North-east. But then you must remember that it's all mountainous that way, and full of bush, which makes it hard climbing. Look out, Tommy! that trash has caught!"

The girl dropped on her knees beside the heap of wood and dead leaves, and shielded the flickering flame as best she might from what little wind blew in from the sea. For a minute the two strange ragged figures were absorbed over their task; then the wood began to crackle, and the man with a sigh of relief sat back on his heels and watched the girl as she enlarged the fire beyond its usual size, and then began to bank it up.

"What's that for?" he asked idly.

"Aren't you going to fish? I don't want the fire to go out while we are in the rock pools!"

"Oh, I shan't be ten minutes with any luck—I'm getting as professional as St. Peter! And you needn't come if you want to watch the fire."

She winced as usual at the Biblical reference, but handed him a burning bundle of dry fern in silence, and persistently followed him down to the sea. Trelawny had, as he said, become expert with his net, for the silly fish rose to the light as if hypnotized if there were any in the pools. He caught two small ones, of a variety of mullet, and saying that that was enough for to-night, returned to the fire, where he killed and cleaned the fish, and the girl roasted them before the blaze. It was, as a fact, more like toasting them, for she spitted them on a fork of mahoo, and held it heedfully just near enough the fire to cook.

"Let's take some fruit with us and go up the Gorge to-morrow," she said. "I've made a kind of string bag out of that fibre you split for me—it will carry as much as we want. You can sling it over your shoulder."

"But you couldn't come up the Gorge—you've no idea how rough it is climbing, and barefoot too!"

"My feet are quite hard. We can try, anyway. If

we start at sunrise, and rest during the heat, we ought to get back before dark."

"I wish I had a watch!" he said regretfully. "It's so difficult to judge within an hour or so, which would make all the difference to us."

"Never mind. We must go by the sun."

"But I'm sure you'll never do it!" he objected, looking at the slim, outlandish figure and the small sunburnt face. "It's enough to kill you."

"If it threatens to do that we must come back!" she said dryly.

"Better let me go alone"—but his voice trailed off nervously she thought, and a troubled look came into his eyes, as of some horror half remembered.

"No," she said curtly. "I'm coming too this time. I've never seen the Gorge. Is that done enough for you?"

"Give it another brown the other side," he said critically. "Then we'll let the fire down and roast the bread-fruit in the ashes."

The girl shrugged her shoulders a trifle impatiently, but she turned the mullet as he suggested, while he scraped the bread-fruit with a sharp piece of conch shell. Trelawny was passably proud of the conch, which he had dragged out of its ocean bed one day when diving, and sharpened with patient labour on a wet slab of rock. It saved his precious knife, and he was always reluctant to trust his companion with that particular treasure.

The girl took the fish carefully off the improvised fork after a minute, and, laying it on the broad leaves that served them for a dish, broke it in two and handed the man his portion in one of the gourds. She was strictly just in this division, and half unconsciously admired herself as she did so, for, being the woman and the weaker vessel, it seemed natural to her that she should have had the preference—not that she was more hungry than the man, but that she claimed it as her right. They used the wooden spoons and forks that they had fashioned out of cedar wood to break up the

fish, and drank clear water from other gourds, for the Island abounded in varieties of calabash. Trelawny was with some clumsiness and much labour beginning to carve a wooden drinking-cup, but it would be some time before it was ready for use, as he was afraid of using his knife save very gently.

When the fish was eaten they rinsed the gourds out and dried them with leaves; but the girl saved the largest and best of the bones for a feminine purpose. Trelawny had managed to bore an eye in one or two, though most of them broke in the process, and these she could thread with the great creeper fibre and make shift to mend the rents that were already showing in her own and her companion's ragged clothes. The average temperature was so warm that had they gone clad in leaves they would have taken no harm physically. But at present it had not come to that.

When the bread-fruit was roasted and eaten. Trelawny still lay by the ashes of the burnt-out fire, his hands clasped under his head and his bare knees drawn up. The girl watched him, without personal interest, but with the anxiety of a doctor in charge of a patient—the duty was there if not the kindness. Now and then he moved a trifle restlessly, and once or twice the ghost of last night's terror flickered in his eyes. She did not go away, even to bestow their uncouth dishes and spoons and forks in the ledges of the cave, but sat with her hands clasped round her own knees in the old half sullen attitude.

"Tommy," he said suddenly, with a piteous quiver in his voice that made her heart bound with fear, "what do you think about?"

"When?" she asked in her startled surprise.

"Now—when you're not working—when you're alone—when this cursed solitude comes down on you and seems a real thing—a kind of devil to drive you mad!"

He half started up, shivering and shaking. But she had edged nearer and laid her hand on his knee soothingly, and he stopped as if recalled to himself.

"I think of all the things I know by heart that describe what I can see—poetry and hymns and songs and prose," she said rapidly, speaking more to soothe him than from any desire to answer his question. "I can remember a lot—I've a good memory." She did not remember to thank God for that, but she did congratulate herself as upon a valuable possession.

"Oh—poetry!" he said, rather doubtfully. "You might tell me—just to give me something to think of too. It would help me, perhaps—"

"I don't think you'd care for it," said the girl, faintly superior still. But the need was too pressing to scruple whether he would appreciate the jewels she hoarded—whether he would even understand them. She began the great Ode, which she really did know by heart, and the measured cadences of the lines rose and fell in her young voice with a growing reverence. She had never been taught to recite, and her utterance was quite unstudied; but he listened hungrily, and her real love for the poem lent her a momentary power of expression, for when it came to her favourite lines her voice dropped slower and the phrase seemed to hold them both in its embrace:

" The same which oft-times hath
Charmed magic casements opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, round fairy lands forlorn ! "

"Why, it's Keats!" he broke in as she finished the poem. "I thought I recognized it."

"Do you know it? Did you ever read poetry?" she asked blankly in her amazement.

"Oh, yes, now and then. I used to be able to troll out 'The Rubáiyát,' but I never thought of doing it here! I've done a good deal of miscellaneous reading," he added indifferently, seeing nothing strange in the fact. "What was that thing? The 'Ode to a Nightingale,' wasn't it? We had a fellow in the Mess who was always spouting."

"Do you like Shakespeare?" asked the girl abruptly. She did not mean to be abrupt this time; she was

really rather shy. His knowledge was so much greater than she expected, and then there was no reckoning the lore of the "fellow in the Mess," who might by chance really have been intellectual—as much so as Leslie Mackelt!

"Pretty well—I liked him on the stage when I was Home—" he pulled himself up with a strange indrawing of his breath, as if he had chanced on a dangerous thought. "Go on—say some more!" he commanded hoarsely. "Don't you know Omar—Omar Kkayyám?"

"There was a Door to which I found no Key—
There was a veil past which I could not see—
Some little Talk awhile of Me and Thee
There seemed—and then no more of Thee and Me
The Moving Finger writes; and having writ
Moves on; nor all thy Piety and Wit—"

"Oh, I've forgotten it," he said restlessly. "Your turn now! Go on—"

And she went on, headlong, in her fear for him, quoting anything that stayed in her memory—the speech on Mercy in the "Merchant of Venice," "All the World's a Stage," a half-page that she remembered from Bacon's "Essays," a few lines from Tennyson, Longfellow's "Psalm of Life" (her reading had been carefully chaperoned), one thing after another until her voice failed and grew hoarse and her despairing heart feared that she had come to the end of the easiest to repeat. But by that time his breathing was regular and quiet, and she thought he was falling asleep. As a bright half-moon came up the heavens, flinging a ladder over the sea to the lost shores of civilization, it looked down on as strange a scene as any its light revealed that night—the wild shore of a tropical island, and two castaways, the man lying on his back, the girl crouching at his knees—both ragged and unkempt as any savages; but from the girl's lips came the flow of winged words that sounded like music.

For with a vague stirring of pity and responsibility in her heart, Leslie looked from the tranquil sea to the

quiescent figure of the man, and began to croon rather than speak the last words that should help him slide into forgetfulness :

“ Sweet and low—sweet and low—
Wind of the western sea—
Low, low, breathe and blow,
Wind of the western sea.
Over the rolling waters go,
Come from the rising moon, and blow,
Blow him again to me !
While my pretty one—while my loved one sleeps ! ”

The voice was the voice of a mother singing to her baby, and all the hardness had gone out of the young face and the resistent figure. Her hand still rested on the man’s knees, pitifully, as though she included him somehow in her lullaby to the dream-child that all girls carry at their breasts.

“ Sleep and rest—sleep and rest—
Father will come to thee soon !
Rest, rest, on mother’s breast—
Father shall come to thee soon.
Father shall come to his babe in the nest,
Silver sails all out of the west,
Under the silver moon !
While my little one—while my pretty one sleeps ! ”

* * * * *

They started for the Gorge the next morning at day-break. Leslie had slept well, once she was assured that Trelawny was in no danger of a recurrence of his madness, and was fresh and ready for the expedition. Indeed, it acted like a tonic on them both, for the novelty of it broke the sameness of the life and destroyed its maddening sense of loneliness for the time being. They took no fish with them, bread-fruit being sufficient for the day, but this and some wild lemon Trelawny carried in the “ string bag ” the girl had constructed, slung over his shoulder. Both of them carried staves, and had covered their heads with plaited palm leaves that bore a remote resemblance to hats. Before the sun was clear of the mountainous country of the interior they had left the beach behind them and

were following the track that Trelawny had made in former expeditions.

At first the girl found the way difficult, and the bush through which they had sometimes to struggle a serious impediment. But she pushed on bravely, and would not listen to the man's suggestion that she should turn back after the first mile. She had grown stronger and more upright in the open air and the health-giving breezes that blew over the Island, and really did not feel the lassitude and fatigue which had hitherto made roughing it in northern Queensland a weariness to the flesh and spirit also. As the sun came over the hills and the dew began to rise they were well into the Gorge, and passed the first of the bundles of wood that Trelawny had flung down when he fled from it in terror. Neither the man nor the girl commented on these silent witnesses of his passing madness, but Leslie hastily drew his attention to a strange tree that began to mark the inland vegetation, and which was as prolific as the bread-fruit and wild lemon.

"Are these good to eat?" she asked, pointing to the gold and green globes under a tuft of leaves at the top of a particularly bare stem.

"Oh, yes—that's papau. It's rather insipid but it's juicy. Like some?" he said laconically, and they sat down on the ground to sample the tropical fruit, which reminded the girl not a little of a melon with the taste left out.

"I think I shall collect some grass and ferns and dry them for a bed," she said idly, as they resumed their journey. "It would be softer than the seaweed."

"All right—I can bring you cartloads," he assented. "But I never found the weed too rough—or else I sleep so sound that as a rule the hard sand would be good enough for me!"

"Your weed is on the sand, and you've hollowed it for a bed-place," objected the girl. "I've got the hard rock under me!"

"So you have, Tommy—I forgot that. Well, we'll begin making hay for you to-morrow," he said kindly

enough, though he seemed to think it a fancy for luxury. "Look at those butterflies! how gorgeous they are."

"It's always gorgeous!" said the girl with a sigh.

So it was—gorgeous with colour spilled from Nature's inexhaustible paint-box, on the wings of the birds and the butterflies, and the blossoms of flowers and leaves of plants. For the hibiscus and the croton fought for breathing space in the Gorge where the wild vines and the creepers gave them light and air enough, and the birds of paradise and the parrots rivalled the great insects that were as winged flowers. Overhead the sky was deepening to the heart of a turquoise, and all about them the dew glistened on great spiders' webs, spun from fern to branch and from bush to palm.

A mile farther and they had reached the limit of Trelawny's exploration—the hot silence and the loneliness that had driven him mad. Here was the branch from which he had seen the bird drop at his feet—it was gone now, for the ants and the rats had done their work—but the place was marked in his memory by the bread-fruit trees that grew here and some kind of citron half smothered in a vine whose tracery had overgrown it, for all the world like a green Shetland shawl! He paused half uneasily, hesitated, and sent a look back along the track, as though some impulse were urging him to drop his staff and flee; but the girl thrust her hand with sudden imperiousness into his.

"I can't get over this rough bit of the track—the stones hurt my feet," she said breathlessly. "You must help me!"

The nervous clasp of her small hard fingers on his own seemed to recall him to himself—the touch of humanity defying the loneliness of Nature. He gripped them harder than he knew, for she bit her lips to keep back a cry, and with his other hand under her armpit he lifted her over the broken ground that suddenly altered the character of the Gorge. A minute later they both uttered an exclamation, for pushing their way through the veil of vines and branches they had emerged into an opening where the land fell back on

either hand, the hills widening into a cup and then narrowing again to a vista that ended in a far line of sea.

"Why! there's the other side of the Island! If I'd only gone on I should have found it before!" he exclaimed. "I told you it was only three or four miles from west to east."

"Ah! but the sea is a mile or so off us yet!" said the girl wisely. "All down that further chasm—What on earth is that water down there?"

They had turned their faces to the north-east, and looked, in a sudden silence. For where the hills widened out almost in a semicircle, there lay at their feet as it were the sullen gleam of a dead lake. It was water undoubtedly, but so dark as to look black, and round the edge of it was a dark brown patch, as if the green, living world had drawn back its skirts from something accurst. It lay some fifty feet away, and below them, in what would have been a little valley but for its presence, and by a natural instinct they seemed to know what it must be and to hold their breath.

It was the man who spoke first.

"Come along," he said, and his teeth were set and his voice odd and jerky. "We must go down there and see."

The girl held back, but only for a moment.

"Must we?" she said wistfully. "Can't we—leave it? It looks so dead, and—horrible!"

"I'm going, anyway."

"Very well, then I'm coming too."

The hill-side was rough enough to daunt them, even after the bush they had left, and it was only by half scrambling and half clinging that they lowered themselves down to the very shore of that strange lake, and pushing through the last green fringe of vegetation found that all round its edge life had shrivelled and died, and that the shores of it were themselves dark, oozy brown, while upon its breast floated a strange sediment that looked like dirty white clay. Trelawny leaned down with his lips still set and dipped his finger

in the water, touching it afterwards with his tongue. It was brackish—nay, salt; and yet they were a mile at least from the good clear sea, and this water was dead and without reason for its existence there.

The girl did not speak, but for a minute they looked into each other's eyes with whitening faces.

"I thought so," he said. "This is what brought us here!"

"But—but—how *could* it!" pleaded the girl, as if fighting the horror of her fear all over again. "And we find it here—right across the Island!"

"Yes, of course—it tore its way through the Gorge, and was received in this cup in the hills. The force was expended then—"

She did not answer, but somehow they found themselves side by side, sitting at the blackened rim of that fell water, their eyes fixed on it as if fascinated.

"It must have been an earthquake under the sea—such things do take place, particularly in these latitudes. Some body of water must have been detached and hurled for miles and miles across the surface of the sea. We were in its path—that's all."

"Yes, but—the rest of the people—the ship itself?"

"I can't tell. They may even have escaped. It was travelling too fast for me to see—but some distance above the level of the ocean—"

He hid his face in his hands, shuddering. And the horror and the stunned incredulity of their first coming back to life shook them again. Overhead the sky mocked them with its blue, and the sunshine danced on the dead surface of the sullen water with its floating fragments.

Suddenly the girl pulled him by the arm.

"Come away!" she said fiercely. "Come away from this place—it is no good brooding. It is hideous and under a ban—let us get on, down the further Gorge."

He stumbled to his feet and followed her, as if mechanically, past the black sheet of water to the further slope up which they toiled into fresher air. After a while

it grew too hot to push on further and they rested on the fern and grasses, and ate their fruit, until the cooler afternoon allowed them to scale the high cliffs overhanging the sea. Here they emerged somewhat abruptly, and found the coast even more precipitous than on the north and west, the great rocks running out into the water like bastions.

"Not much to be seen here, except some good fishing pools," said Trelawny succinctly. "And I suspect there would be sharks. We're on the best side of the Island, Tommy—Heavens! what was that?"

A big brown bird had scuttled past them and disappeared into the thick bush, startling them by its sudden appearance. It would have surprised them in any case, for it was so much larger than any bird they had yet seen; but what really caused Trelawny's exclamation was its extraordinary resemblance to any ordinary hen—an English fowl, speckled and motherly if rather thin, that might be seen in any farmyard. The sound it uttered, too, as it fled was the familiar cluck! cluck! of a hen, though its appearance here on a desert island in the tropics was as incredible as if a magic table spread with golden dishes had suddenly risen out of the earth. It had vanished as suddenly as it appeared, however, and no pushing further into the bush could discover its whereabouts, though in his excitement Trelawny would fain have lingered. The lengthening light at last warned them that they must turn westward if they would get through the Gorge before darkness fell, and they hurried on their way, still eagerly discussing the mystery—far more so than the existence of the dead salt water, which they repassed almost unnoticed.

"You know," the girl kept on saying as they retraced their way through the Gorge, "it could not have been a hen! Then what was it?"

"Some species of bird far larger than I know to exist here, I suppose," said Trelawny, as he pushed a path for her by going first through the bush. "But, anyhow, it's a find. If we can only get hold of more

birds like that we shall get eggs at least, and they may be more eatable than the sea-birds."

"I can't get over its *clucking*."

"Well, it was distinctly of the same species as our fowls, so naturally it made the same kind of row."

"But a *hen, here!* It's impossible."

"We should have said that beastly salt water was impossible in such a place if we hadn't seen it."

"What will you do?"

"Go over to the north side again and see if I can get hold of another phantom hen!"

For the first time she laughed—a little faint sound that was only the beginning of mirth, so out of use did it seem. "Fancy hunting a hen!—an ordinary barn-door fowl! If you do get hold of one, don't kill it—do bring it back alive!"

"For the sake of the eggs, you mean?" said the man practically.

"No—because—it seemed so like—home!" she breathed, and then, because tears are so near to laughter, her eyes filled after her poor little merriment, and she was glad she was walking behind him—he might have scolded her.

But he did not. Instead, when the path grew roughest he turned back and lifted her over the broken ground with more human consideration than he had yet had heart to show her since the wicked water flung them side by side into awful solitude.

"You're tired, Tommy," he said kindly. "It is better going now—lean on me."

CHAPTER VI

“ ‘Alas, Night !’ Then the stagnant season lay
From hill to hill. But when the waning moon
Rose, she began with hasty steps to run . . .
Silent,—for all her strength did bear her dread—
Like one who wrestles in the dark with fiends,
‘Alas, Night !’ With a dim wild voice of fear,
As though she saw her sorrow by the moon.”

SYDNEY DOBELL.

RELAWNY made numerous excursions over to the north of the Island after the first exploration, but he never contrived to kill or capture a bird of the large species they had both seen. Once, indeed, he returned in the same state of excitement, positive that the “phantom hen” had passed him again, and run, clucking, into the bush ; but it had been too late in the day to follow far, and he could only puzzle and speculate as to the creature’s existence in a solitary condition, for he never came across traces of any mate for it, or of its young. If the *Aristo* had had live fowls on board, he might have even entertained the wild theory that one of them had been carried to the Island like themselves, and flung on the northern coast ; but the steamer, like other ships of her class, had carried her eggs in cold storage and had had no live stock save the cows. His expeditions were of use in other ways, however, for he discovered wild mulberries and yam, and other fruits, all of which would increase their store of food in due season. There was also honey, made by a bee no larger than a common fly, and stored in the hollow parts of trees ; but it was so fluid as to be difficult to carry in the gourds which were his only vessels, and the danger of collecting it made it a rare luxury in their diet.

At first the girl insisted on accompanying him when

he went far afield, sharing his fatigue and labour with dogged endurance. But as his restlessness left him and the unnatural terror did not recur, she gradually relaxed her vigilance and allowed him to work alone again, only walking out some way to meet him when she knew that he ought to be returning, timing herself by the sunset. Trelawny was busy making a fresh beacon to the north-west, and even at the extreme north of the Island, and was rarely idle, coming back to the cave so tired that after fishing he would frequently drowse over his supper, and talked as little as ever. He had cut and dried the grass and fern for his companion as he promised, and she rested far more comfortably on her softer bed in the inner cave. If he had had any implements he would have tried to cultivate a plot of land between the stream of fresh water and the cave ; but he had nothing save his rough staff and his bare hands, and though he might have transplanted the smaller plants it was hopeless to think of the young trees on which would grow the fruit they wanted, and he had no grains with which to experiment. He did keep the seeds of melon and papau and dry them, but it would be long before they would germinate and reward his labour—so long that he was planting for a future need of which he would not let himself think. The beacon represented his hope, and he kept the possibility of rescue steadily before him as the pivot of his sanity. The planted seeds, on the other hand, suggested a continued necessity for food as years rolled by that was intolerable to contemplate. He worked feverishly to cheat himself of brooding, and hardly noticed how the days passed by.

There was less for the girl to do. The preparing of the food he brought, and the mending of their clothes, or the plaiting of fibre, did not prevent her thinking. Less practical and experienced than Trelawny, she did not concentrate her attention on her employment for the sake of her own health, and began to spend the long hours in brooding while he was away. Even the stock of poetry and prose in her memory no longer

soothed her, and at times it seemed to her that her mind was almost blank save for a sensation of despair. The succession of blue days and golden sunshine and the luxuriance of Nature was becoming a horror to her, as if God were visibly mocking her misery and destitution which He had decreed. It must change—it must surely change! It was impossible that her life after twenty-one short years must be lived out in this cramped fashion, starved of everything but the vivid power of existence in her strengthening limbs. She was too much alive to die, and yet all that constitutes life was taken from her—its possibilities and its very meaning. It was *impossible* that this state of things should continue!—And still the silence, and the sweetness, and the longing, went on as before.

One day—she had lost count of sunrise and sunset—she went into the cave about noon, not to sleep but to find her store of fishbone needles, carefully kept in one of the natural rock-cupboards where she and Trelawny placed their treasures. Leslie Mackelt presented a strange appearance indeed by now. Her short hair had grown to an uncomfortable length that was neither the boy's curly crop or the girl's long tresses. It fell in untidy locks over her sunburnt face and she shook it fiercely out of her eyes after stooping, its very thickness adding to her unkempt appearance. Her linen shirt had been torn and cobbled up many a time, and in spite of such washing and bleaching as she could do was stained with the juice of fruit and berries, while her knickerbockers hung in shreds at her bare knees. It was to mend a rent gained in the Gorge that she was looking for the fishbone needles and some fibre thread. If the bone snapped she had now some huge thorns that Trelawny had discovered and brought back for her to try; but the sewing was almost as elementary as Eve's.

The broad midday light was so strong that it penetrated even to the back of the cave and showed her the arched roof and the walls, slab over slab of smooth rock where Trelawny had cut the dates of the month

as the days passed. She stood near his sleeping-place—the rough bed of seaweed in the hollowed sand—and looked vacantly at the record scratched on the stone, last night's number as neatly cut as any, though he had been so full of sleep. Trelawny was a methodical person, and never neglected a duty he had set himself, however disinclined. Leslie was aware, at the back of her mind, that in his place she would often have let a date slip on the plea of picking it up on the morrow, and so would have produced an even less reliable calendar. The knowledge of her own shortcoming irked her, even in her own mind, and made her irritable.

The last date that Trelawny had scratched upon the rock the night before was 24, and the letter at the beginning of the month's numerals was D. Leslie Mackelt read it mechanically, but it made no impression on her mind. D—that stood for December. The 24th of December then was yesterday, according to their calculations, and to-day was the 25th. December 25th—where had she heard that date specially accentuated before, and what did it mean? December 25th! But her mind wandered away to the time that had elapsed since they had been cast on the Island—to the wicked salt lake beyond the Gorge—to the ship that might have been swamped for all they knew. She wondered if her brother Donald were dead, and it came upon her with a little shock that if so he had been dead some weeks and she had never mourned for him—never speculated as to the possibility of her loss. The stranding of her own life had seemed so sufficing in its horror that she had not thought to calculate her losses in the civilized world beyond the horizon. How long had they been on the Island? She ran her finger slowly up the crooked figures, calculating slowly. About six weeks. And now it was December 25th. . . .

December 25th!

She knew suddenly that it was Christmas Day, and looked round her with the eyes of one startled by a new horror. Christmas Day! The emptiness of the hot, blue sky and the vertical beams of the sun stared her

in the face as if looking to see how she took the curious fact, while she glared back at them like a creature at bay. Somewhere in the real world was frost and snow, holly and ivy and church bells—the images of her former Christmases tumbled over each other in her mind, while later knowledge reminded her of the summer heat of the antipodes, Christmas in Australia with flowers and fruit and holiday merriment.

But everywhere on earth it was a festival, or so it seemed to her tempest-tossed mind, everywhere but here in this small lost islet where God had flung and then forgotten her. Neither she nor Trelawny had taken heed of the date, or remembered the birth of Christ in this Christless corner of the world. Was it wonderful, when God had forgotten them?

She sat down at the mouth of the cave, staring at the dazzle of sea and sky and white beach, and it seemed as if her mind went into a trance. Old incidents connected with the Christmas season recurred to vex her, and she teased herself with dwelling on the presents she had set her heart upon, even as a child, and never obtained—of the unnatural cheerfulness of the service in chapel, and the oppressive dinner of beef and plum-pudding in company with her brothers, who had been at best half strangers to her, but whose clannishness caused them to regard a family gathering at Christmas as something almost like a religious duty. For Christmas to Leslie Mackelt had hardly been a time of good-will, even in the real world. It was a ceremony rather than a festival. And there had been no parties or Christmas-trees for her as for other children, the merry-making being limited to afternoon teas amongst the older portion of the congregation, at which the children had sat silent and very quiet. Last year her youngest brother's place in the family circle had been empty—he had gone to his death in the mission fields of Africa, and the blessedness of his attainment was much insisted upon in references by the two surviving brothers, Donald especially waxing fervent over reminiscences. The little sister, starved of the demands

of her nature, had sat silent, wondering how Alec had found any beauty in the line of ceaseless serious effort ending in death before he had reaped any of the possibilities of existence—and had hated herself for her infamy. It was all *wrong*, in her pitiful narrow phrase, and she was wrong in herself to feel it so. That was the Christmas thought to Leslie Mackelt.

She must have sat at the mouth of the cave for some hours, for when she again became conscious of her surroundings the light was low and golden, and the beautiful transformation of the sunset was beginning over the sea. The solemn beauty of it held her in a vice for a few minutes, while it seemed that the real world hummed off into distance with its ugly matter-of-fact memories, and nothing was left but an utter emptiness. It came upon her with crushing realization that ~~the~~ universe was too large for the narrow creed taught her—that God was not to be confined inside chapel or out—that all her life had been so cramped and small that now—*now*—she was doubly lost because so much alone in such vast seas. Her thought went out and out to the horizon, and found more sea, and the solitude came down and struck her like a material thing, as it had done the man. She started up, gasping with terror, mad to get away to the boundaries that she knew, anywhere, out of this eternal loneliness. And then she began to run—

Trelawny was late back that evening, for he had found good store of food, new fruits and roots, and some parrots that he had succeeded in bringing down with his sling. His burden was heavy and he walked slowly, glad that he need not fish on account of the birds ; but when he reached the mouth of the Gorge he was surprised that Leslie was not there to meet him. He wondered if they had missed each other, hoped not, for dark was coming on, and quickened his steps. But the cave and beach were deserted, and there was no fire lit or food prepared. He swore mechanically, and then checked himself, ashamed of the raw word in the stillness. Then he looked round him helplessly, realizing

for the first time how much he owed to companionship and how lost he should feel if quite alone.

There was nothing to tell him the way that she had gone, but his growing uneasiness and the rapidly fading light made him hurry from one point to another, startling the silence with his voice. "Tommy!" he called. "Tommy!" It had the most eerie effect in that wild solitude, and a faint echo from the Gorge gave him back his voice—"—my!" like a ghostly answer. He began to fear that she had met with an accident, and ran down the beach to see if she had slipped on the rocks, then up to the northern headland to hunt her on the slopes, and back to the cave in case she had hurt herself and crawled there for shelter.

It was too late now to light a fire, and he cursed his carelessness for not doing so sooner, and having the light to assist him. Besides, there was the beacon. Even if he could distinguish a sail now across the darkening waters he had no means of setting a light to it save by the long and almost hopeless process of friction. As a rule they banked the embers of their supper fire to smoulder till morning, that they might have a speedy light.

He had mechanically begun to make his way towards the beacon as he thought of it, and emerging suddenly on the cliff caught sight of the figure he sought standing out on the promontory, outlined against the fading colours of the sunset. She was standing rigidly still, with glassy eyes fixed on the sky, and as he approached her he saw that her lips moved, though she uttered no cry. The next instant he had sprung forward and was wrestling with her, putting out all his man's strength to resist her frenzied effort to hurl herself over the low cliff on to the bed of rocks below. He had no idea that her slight body could have been so violent in its madness, and it was all he could do to drag her step by step out of danger, the while she shrieked and wailed to him to let her go—anywhere—out of it—the loneliness—the empty world that was killing her—

"Be quiet!" he said through his teeth, and the

beads of moisture broke out on his forehead as he struggled to hold her. "You shall not, I say—you shall not!"

He had pinioned her arms at last, and flung her down on the short grass, behind the great pile of the beacon. But his own face was haggard as he knelt beside her, holding her safe from her own insane impulse, while she sobbed miserably, and quivered in his grasp. He remembered his own madness, and wondered how long it had lasted. Had she sat out with him all night, with a woman's patience, and had he fought and raved like this? Once she almost eluded him by writhing in his grip as if he hurt her, and when he relaxed it springing up and running like a deer for the cliff-edge again. Had she not tripped over some loose brushwood lying by the beacon she would have been over. After that he held her in his arms, pressed against his breast, and dared not loosen his hold for an instant. He could feel her tears wet on his bare throat, but could not follow her mutterings.

After a time she ceased to struggle, and lay limply in his arms. He staggered to his feet at last, and carried her slowly down to the cave, even as she had once led him, setting himself at the mouth of it with his back to the stone as she had done, and the little boyish figure resting on his knees. His own eyes were wet as he patted the rough head, and felt himself helpless to shield her from the terror that was crushing her down. The solitude had had them both in its grip, victims of its relentless reality.

"Poor Tommy!" he said brokenly. "Poor Tommy!"

She stirred, and he thought she was delirious, for she repeated something about "Christmas Day"; but when the words came over and over again he began to think and to find a connection in them.

"Is it Christmas Day?" he said gently. "We had forgotten, hadn't we?" And then again. "Poor Tommy!"

"Christmas Day!" she babbled in a new spasm of

fear, and then, "All alone in all the world!—Don't leave me!" her voice rising to a shriek of terror.

"Hush! I'm not going to leave you. Lie still," he said firmly, and then he found to his relief that by stretching out his hand he could reach the load of food he had brought home. The birds must go, and would probably be uneatable in the morning, but he picked up some fruit and made her eat it, feeding her like a child. It reminded him of the first days on the Island, when she had slowly struggled back to life, and he had nursed her—more from the selfish desire of companionship than any nobler motive. Now she was again like a sick child, and he felt the tenderness with which young and helpless things had always inspired him. So far she had not earned even his liking beyond what he might have given to an ill-trained boy forced on him by circumstances. He had seen all her faults, and had resented her selfishness with closed lips, use making her tolerable, but certainly not attractive to him. There was something repellent or defiant in her manner, even in the slight communication between them, and he had not cared to know more of her than the need of every day. His mind, always fixed on possible escape from the prison of this desert Island, had taken but listless interest in the things at hand, Leslie Mackelt among the number. Now he felt a twinge of remorse at having left her to bear her part of the mental burden alone, and for never having displayed even a feigned interest in her past life, or told her of his. She had seemed to him a strange, unattractive nature; but he must have seemed to her a little cruel.

"Tommy," he said at last, "are you asleep?"

She looked up with dark, wet eyes—he could see them shine in the darkness—into his rough, unshaven face. He was almost as wild and unkempt a figure as she.

"No," she said desperately, "I'm afraid to sleep!"

"You'll go to sleep presently," he consoled her, and his voice was very kind. "There's nothing to be afraid of now. I'm going to stay here with you—you'll sleep all right if I'm here."

She sighed a little, as if with relief, and laid her head back against his shoulder. It seemed to him rather pitiful that she should feel so light and slender, for he had not hesitated to give her her share of work since their enforced partnership. She had looked tired sometimes—he remembered that now; at the time he had only been grimly determined that she should not shirk. And she had stood by him with real pluck when the solitude-horror had descended on him. It was his turn to show her a comrade's duty now.

"Tommy," he said, rather awkwardly, bending his head down to the tense white face. "Try to pull yourself together—don't back out on it like you tried to-night—don't leave me—alone!"

He did not know if she heard, for she did not answer. But she lay there across his knees, restless, and it seemed that after a while they both slept, while the Christmas stars came out one by one in a glorious summer sky, looking down on the two waifs of humanity as on other flotsam flung on desert shores.

CHAPTER VII

“ When the play began between them for a jest,
He played king and she played queen to match the best.
Laughter soft as tears, and tears that turned to laughter,
These were things she sought for years and sorrowed after.”

A. C. SWINBURNE.

THEIR discovery of the mutual derangement liable to fall on them at any time, drew the two castaways closer together, as tramps on a winter night will make common cause and sit cheek by jowl for the sake of warmth, though strangers to each other. The instinctive desire for sympathy and help in their dreaded experience made the man and the girl loath to be left alone—it even drew them near to each other when sitting over their supper, or at such times as they were at leisure, which, however, were rare. They called it the Solitude-Madness, and watched each other furtively to see if it were likely to recur, the least symptom bringing one or the other quickly to the rescue with some new plan of labour, or an exploration of the Island that should serve as a distraction. After the girl had succumbed to the same horror as the man, he would not leave her for a few days ; but it was at her own request that at last he undertook to force his way along the bed of the fresh-water stream, in search of new fruits and roots that should serve for food, and incidentally to discover, maybe, the source of the stream.

“ It probably rises in that chain of hills that runs along the right of the Gorge and ends on the east or south-east of the Island,” said the man, speculating. “ But the vegetation on its banks will differ in some sort to that in the Gorge, which is dry except for dew and rain, or on the coasts. Are you sure you will be all right ? I’ll take you with me if you like.”

"No—I shall be all right. I've got some work to do, patching. If you will leave me your shirt I'll see if I can cobble up that sleeve you tore yesterday," said the girl practically.

"Will you?" Trelawny looked ruefully at his tattered garment, which by now showed signs of yielding to the stress of weather and pioneering in the raw bush. "Upon my word, Tommy, I don't know what we are going to do for clothes in a short time! The—the Garden of Eden is being forced upon us!" He laughed a little ruefully, suddenly remembering her sex.

"We can make shift with leaves or long grass, if necessary," said the girl shortly. "You won't feel the sun too hot?"

"Not under those bamboos by the stream—they shut it in mostly. I shan't be gone long, either, only a few hours, I expect. I'm just going to explore to-day."

"All right," said the girl, turning back to the cave and her thorn needles, which were proving more satisfactory than the fish-bone. "Don't trouble about the fish—I'll get some for supper."

"Oh, I shall be back in time for that," said the man lightly, and stripping his tattered, discoloured shirt, he left himself the silk vest, which had suffered less, for his journey. His braces had not yet given way, and he was able to retain what was left of his trousers. But had it not been for the need of protection to his northern skin, and the sex of his companion, he would rather have chosen to go naked as a South Sea Islander. Heat and expediency usually led him to the conviction that Nature did not intend man to inconvenience himself with clothing in the dense growths of the Equator.

The day, according to Trelawny's record, was the 31st of December, a week having passed since Christmas Day and Leslie's madness. The girl set to her task somewhat laboriously, and threading her needles with the split fibre of some tough creeper, she began to make small punctures in the fabric of her own garments to draw the improvised thread slowly in and out. It was tedious work, and disheartening, for though the

fibre did not break, it was too harsh and coarse for her purpose, and threatened to tear the rotten rags still more, nearly reducing Leslie to despair. Nevertheless, she struck to her task with a dogged persistence that was perhaps due to her Scotch origin, and having finished her own more pressing need, began to repair the torn sleeve of Trelawny's shirt. By the time she had finished the sun was past the meridian, and it was the hour when human nature demanded sleep—the universal siesta of the middle of the tropical day. But though Leslie climbed into the inner cave, and threw herself down on her bed, clasping her hands under her head in the attitude most conducive to sleep for her, she felt restless and disinclined for slumber. She did not expect Trelawny back for some hours yet, but she had a curious sense that he wanted her—almost that he was calling to her, and a gloomy premonition of disaster made the bright blaze of noon appear dull and shadowed. Once she got up and wandered a little way out on the cliff, but there was nothing tangible to see or hear, and the intense heat drove her back again. Then she really did fall into a feverish sleep, from which she awoke more certain than before that he was calling to her.

Trelawny had found his task easier than he expected. The banks of the stream were smothered with creepers and low-growing bush, it is true, and in some parts the bamboos which flourished there met overhead, making a dull twilight; but the stream was so shallow that where he could not gain a foothold on the banks he waded, and being without his linen shirt he really felt the heat less overpowering than on former excursions into the hills, where he was less sheltered. To protect his skin from the crowds of insects that stung and irritated him he broke a big branch of wild mulberry, and armed with this he forced his way steadily upstream, sometimes having to scramble over the great bamboos that had fallen across the water and were too large and heavy to be washed down. Trelawny was glad to see the bamboos, for though they grew in smaller clumps at the mouth of the Gorge they were

nothing like as fine or as numerous, and there is no wood that grows in the tropics which is so generally useful. This was a part of the little Island that, as it happened, he had not actually explored, though he knew the lie of the land from his vantage-point on the cliffs to the north-west.

The stream narrowed and twisted, sometimes so full of deep holes that Trelawny judged it wisest to scramble up on the bank and follow its winding until he reached a shallow, where he could see the bottom, and the fish darted away under the banks at his approach. Once it disappeared entirely underground, and he roamed about for fifty yards thinking he had traced it as far as he might, only to discover it again welling up under a group of large-leaved ficus. It was very beautiful, even in the increasing heat of the tropical day, and he wished that he had brought Leslie.

The bed of the stream was clay as far as he could judge, and the banks were the rich clay soil whence he had taken the material in which to cook his fish on his first arrival on the Island. But despite its promising appearance, he did not find the variety of plants that he had hoped until he emerged rather suddenly into an open space at the foot of the range of hills lying between him and the Gorge, when he stood still and gave a sudden shout of discovery. For climbing up the rising land to his left, flourishing in the shelter of the range and the moisture of the clay, were a group of tall plantains, whether planted by man or indigenous to the soil he could not tell, but plantains without doubt and bearing fruit. What rice is to India, and what wheat is to Europe, the plantain is to the South Pacific and Atlantic. It is veritably the staff of life, and Trelawny recognized its appearance in this wilderness as though it were manna from heaven.

He clambered up to the broken ground on which it had propagated itself and taken hold, and found that the plantation was large enough to serve his turn and Leslie's for many a day while he was carefully striking fresh suckers and waiting for them to bear. The

broad, broken leaves seemed to him like friendly hands stretched out to him, and in his eagerness he hardly looked where he was going, and found himself slipping back from the ledge he wished to reach into a bed of vegetation that might be many feet deep. To save himself he caught hold of a ficus, and then proceeded to climb by one of the "monkey-ladders" formed by a great creeper hanging pendant from its upper boughs. The creeper hung in straight lines, but Trelawny impatiently knotted two of its ropes together and set his foot on them. The knot had been carelessly tied in his hurry, and he felt it slip ; he caught at another, twisting it round his arm ; but it gave beneath his weight, and though it did not break it lowered him so swiftly that his foot slid off the resting-place it had found, and he caught at it instead with his hand—caught too successfully, for the swinging vine ran through his hands and jerked up short under his chin, catching his head in a noose, as the slip-knot tightened, as neatly as if some enemy had planned it.

For a minute he hung in air, his dangling feet failing to find a foothold, his hands fighting madly to release himself. It was a sickening struggle for life or death, for he was in danger of having his neck broken or being choked, the pressure from the wicked vine tendrils becoming almost unbearable. His hands clutched at the noose and tore it open, while he swung to and fro gasping, and before his eyes the blue sky and the plantains bobbed up and down like a ghastly peep-show, as the last things, perhaps, that he might see in this world. Had he been asked a few minutes since if death had any terrors for him, castaway as he was, with rescue growing more and more remote, he would have laughed at the idea ; but the instinct of life was stronger than his philosophy, and he fought as for the dearest treasure that could be his.

A moment more and he felt that the vines would have their way with him, for his muscles would no longer support the pressure of his dangling weight, which tightened the noose against all his efforts. He

thrust madly with his feet in open space, dragged the vines apart with a last effort, and felt the whole creeper give way and fling him down into the sea of greenery beneath. As he fell he spun round and came down with a sickening thud that knocked the remaining breath out of him, for he had dropped into a deep hole concealed by the treacherous leaves of many small bushes. The branches and the tangle of greenery broke the fall a little, however, and after a few minutes he was able to drag himself to his feet, only to discover that his ankle was badly wrenched, if not broken.

What a fool he had been ! He cursed his own impatience, and shook his fist at the plantains, still waving green palms beyond his reach and mocking him with the coveted fruit. There was no hope of clambering up there now, at any rate, and, indeed, he had a bad enough task before him to get home. He found that by leaning on the staff he always took with him when exploring the Island he could manage to hobble ; but it was a painful process, and he feared that his foot would get worse as he attempted to use it. There was nothing else to be done, however, for if he stayed where he was on the chance of the girl setting out to find him he might be incapable of moving at all as the joint stiffened.

He had freed his neck from the tight-drawn vine, and felt that his throat was for the moment more painful than his ankle. It was bruised and swollen, and to swallow was a difficulty ; but he made a cup out of a *ficus* leaf and drank some water before he began his homeward journey. The healing water was twice his friend, and as he felt it running coolly round his legs he hoped that it might reduce the pain in his ankle ; but every step was a torture, and his progress was necessarily slow. Once he stepped on a stone and turned faint and dizzy with the pain as his foot twisted afresh, and as time went on his throat appeared to get worse rather than better, and he found on trying that he could hardly speak. It was past midday when, after many halts, he emerged at last into the broad shallow which they called the

drinking pool, and crawling along the bank looked with longing eyes to the haven of the beach, only a hundred yards or so away. He could barely move, and he could not call out, but he dragged his body somehow across the intervening space and was wondering if he would ever reach the girl, when he saw her come running to meet him.

Leslie's presentiment of evil had roused her finally about two o'clock with the impression that Trelawny was calling out. She stood up, with the dream still in her eyes, looking vaguely round her, before she began to move mechanically in the direction from which she expected him to come. It was too early for him to get back, but—what was that object, stumbling, crawling, seeming but half human, and by no means the man who had left her that morning walking upright? For a minute she gazed, shivering, thinking it some new terror approaching her from the bush, in his absence; then with a little cry she dashed forward to meet him, and caught him in her arms almost as he fell at her feet.

All the maternal instinct was alive in her as she wound her strong young arms round the failing, bruised figure, and supported him the few yards to the cave—more so than when she had found him, raving, on the northern cliffs, for then at least he could help himself. She saw the discoloured marks on the swollen throat, and bruises about his body of which he was himself unconscious, and she uttered little lovely mother sounds, unknowing that she did so, as though over a sick child. He was past speech, but he pointed to his throat, and she understood—to his ankle, and she helped him on to his rough bed, and proceeded to tend him.

The relief of the recumbent attitude must have made him swoon again, he thought, for when he next opened his eyes he was aware of a most delicious coolness on his throat and ankle and of an unusually soft pillow. Then he found that she had brought her own bedding of dried grass and fern and heaped it under his head and shoulders, lifting him inch by inch to move his dead weight

from the harsher weed, while his throat and ankle were ingeniously poulticed with a compress of wet grass bound round with a piece of creeper such as had wrought his disaster. The grass bandage was fresh-pulled from the cliff and soaked in water, being covered with broad leaves, while the girl sat at his side with a gourd full, renewing the moisture as soon as it showed signs of getting dry. The cold compress had already so far reduced the swelling that he could speak in a husky whisper.

"Got caught in a vine," he gasped hoarsely. "Nearly hanged. I was going after—"

"Yes, all right!" she interrupted soothingly. "Don't talk! Can you swallow? I want to feed you."

"Oh, yes—I'm hungry. But I must tell you—" he half raised himself in his eagerness, but his bruised body hurt him, and his brow contracted.

The girl put her arm under the muscular shoulders again, and supported him. She heard his sigh of relief as he rested against her. "Now, what do you want to say?" she asked, with the indulgence of a mother to a restless child.

"I found plantains—do you understand? *Plantains!* on my soul I did!"

"That's good!" She knew the value of the plantain also, but in her heart she thought the discovery weighed little against his injuries and the risk he must have run. She shuddered a little as he gasped out his story to her, seeming to think nothing of it now the worst was over and he could go back any time and get the blessed fruit.

"The worst of it is I'm tied here for some time, I'm afraid. What did you think of my foot? Is it much swollen?"

"A good deal—but I don't think any bones are broken, or you *couldn't* have got home! Never mind—I'll keep the wet grass on it, and you'll be about again in a little while."

"You'll have to do the hunting, I'm afraid," he said, with a weak laugh. "I can't even help you to cook, laid here on my back!"

"I'll do it—don't be afraid. We won't either of us starve. Why, I feel able to do all your work and mine too. Look how strong I am!"

She got up to reassure him, and stood before him in the golden light of the afternoon, a strange ragged figure, light and boyish, and yet instinct with life and strength, as she said. He looked up at her, and seemed to see something he had not expected, and that left him a little surprised. Perhaps it prompted his next words, half unconsciously.

"Did you manage to mend my sleeve?"

"Yes. Would you be more comfortable with your shirt on? I can easily slip it over your head."

"I think I should. If you'll help me to sit up I'll get into it."

She fetched the shirt, which, besides mending, she had wrung out in fresh water and bleached it in the sun, so that it looked a more respectable garment, and she helped him into it with some pride. Then she was going to feed him with some bread-fruit which she had baked for her midday meal and kept hot in the ashes, but to her amazement he made another demand first in spite of his avowed hunger.

"I should like to bathe my face and hands, if you don't mind," he said, still in that unnatural voice, and she hastened to bring the largest calabash filled with fresh water, and some giant leaves with which she herself had made shift as towels, even finding that when bruised they softened and cooled her skin from sunburn. Then she renewed the wet compresses, urging him to lie down again lest his shirt should get wet.

"I wish I could cut my hair somehow," he said discontentedly, pushing the straggling locks behind his ears. "I feel like a beastly æsthetic poet!"

She laughed a little, her amused eyes taking in the half-grown beard and the unkempt locks, which were certainly very unsoldierlike. There seemed hardly any resemblance between the wild head and ragged figure at her feet and the receding vision in her mind of Major Trelawny on board the *Aristo*—the smartest man on

board, whom she had secretly longed to know, and grudgingly told herself that he was not worth knowing. Fate had laid the object of her jealous envy low before her, and taken away all the outward show that had attracted her. Though she did not yet know it, it was her turn to-day.

"I once saw a man singe his hair to keep it short," she said. "It was up in the Bush, in Northern Queensland. He set the ends alight, and then patted them out with his hands!"

"By Jove! that's not a bad idea. I am afraid it's grown too long though."

"And you have no idea how it smells! I could not come near you for a week."

"I should not like that!" he said involuntarily, and then looked up with his quick blue eyes as if he had betrayed himself. But the girl referred it to their usual fear of solitude, and her eyes were only rather kind as they met his.

"I can't leave you while you are laid up like this, so please don't set your head alight yet awhile!" she said good-humouredly. "I'll make up the fire to save re-lighting it, and as soon as it gets dark I will go and fetch some fish for supper. Here's your bread-fruit."

He lay back comfortably on the soft bed of hay and fern, and munched the food, watching her with a curious awakening look as she went to and fro mending the fire. Later on she went off with the net to the rock pools; but he could still just see her from where he lay by the light that she carried to attract the fish—an active figure, untrammelled by corsets or shoes, and moving in consequence as easily as one of the natives of Mauritius. He had often declared that those black women had the most perfect carriage he had ever known: now it dawned on him that a white woman can regain something of the same advantage with the abandonment of her heels and stays.

When she came back from her fishing, triumphant, he still watched her moving about the fire, cleaning the fish, and preparing the evening meal. She was as

perfectly unconscious of his scrutiny as she was of the fact that a new health and strength made the doing of every task an enjoyment instead of a weariness to the flesh.

"Look! I got one mullet and a parrot fish!" she said, holding them up ready-spitted for toasting before the wood blaze. "I know the parrot fish isn't good eating, but beggars mustn't be choosers!" There was something almost provocative in the flash of her brown eyes.

"I think you have grown taller since we came to the Island," was his irrelevant answer. "Or else you carry yourself better. How old are you?"

"Twenty-one—I've done growing," she answered a trifle shortly, for the steady gaze with which he favoured her began to make her restive.

"You look less like a girl and more like a woman, anyhow."

"Don't talk—it's bad for your voice," said Leslie laconically, and turned away to her cooking, rather glad of the excuse. She was suddenly hotly aware of the ragged shirt over her white breast and the increasing emphasis of her figure. For he was right, and she knew it; the lines of her bosom had filled out, and her untrammelled waist and hips were not so flat and boyish as they had been two months since. She wondered if her scanty clothes made her indecent, and if that was what he meant, and her eyes filled with angry tears at her helplessness to hide herself more successfully. There was an added brusqueness in her manner when she brought him his supper, but the instinct of succour forced her to offer her arm to raise him as before—and besides, in such a position he could not look at her with those embarrassing eyes.

"I have forgotten your name again," he said unexpectedly, as he broke the fish with the wooden fork. She was kneeling beside him to afford him support that he might not move his ankle, and he could see the half-angry flush on her face.

"It is Leslie Mackelt—but it does not matter."

"Yes, it does—I have been calling you Tommy all along."

"Well, I don't care. And besides, as there are only two of us, there is no need to use any names at all!"

"I think there is a good deal of need while I am laid up like this! How am I to call you when I want you? Are you like the gentleman in the 'Hunting of the Snark'—

"He would answer to Hi!
Or to any loud cry—
Such as Fry me! or Fritter my wig!"

"I have never read the 'Hunting of the Shark'!"

"Snark—not shark," he corrected. "I shall evidently have to finish your education!"

This was a stab in a vulnerable point. "I have read as much or more than you—things that were worth reading!" she said hotly.

"So you have! It was ungrateful of me, considering how you spouted that night I was—I was ill." He stammered even now over the mention of the Solitude-Madness. "Will you do it for me again to-night?"

"If it will prevent your talking," said the girl curtly. He took the hint this time, or else the eating of his supper kept him quiet, for he spoke no more until, her own supper ended and the utensils carefully put away, she came and sat down by his side again in the darkness of the cave.

"Don't sit there—I can't see you," he objected. "Come round on the other side, and face me."

"I don't want to be seen," said the girl, almost rudely. "We are neither of us pretty objects to look at, you and I."

"I don't agree with you," he said, no less emphatically for his hoarseness. "At least, I can't speak for myself, having no glass—I've no doubt I am hideous enough. But you at least are a picturesque savage maiden!"

The girl coloured again in the darkness, as much from surprise as any pleasure that his assurance gave her. She was suspicious of this new mood of his, and thought

he was ridiculing her, and the thought made her furious. If he had not been so really helpless she would have sprung up and rushed away into the darkness to rave and storm to herself over the heartlessness of this remnant of a "fine gentleman" under all his rags; but common humanity kept her at his side, and she relapsed into sullen silence, drawing herself, however, a little further into the shadow and away from him.

"Are you there?" he asked after a minute, trying to turn his head, and desisting with an expression of pain that brought the girl to his assistance again like a flash of lightning.

"What is it? Why do you try to move?" she scolded him; but she slipped her arm under his shoulders again and raised him as gently as if he were a baby.

"I thought you had gone away—I was afraid I had made you cross," he whispered, as if his voice were exhausted.

"No," said the girl grudgingly, "I won't leave you—but you ought to go to sleep now. I'll—I'll 'spout' if you like!" She used the deprecatory word a trifle resentfully.

"Yes, do. Say that thing about the 'Wind of the Western Sea'—will you? And do sit where I can see you!"

She looked down curiously at his head resting against her shoulder. In spite of the ragged beard and hair he was not the hideous object he had suggested, and there was unconscious coaxing in his eyes—the faint reflection of a manner that belonged to the lost life of civilization. It was too strange to Leslie for her to classify it; she had no experience of such men as Trelawny and the assurance that means social success.

"Why!" she said slowly. "Did you hear *that*? I thought you were asleep!"

"No—I was watching you."

He remembered that wonderful look on her face that had half awed him on the night in question, and hoped to see it again. But when she had heaped the dried grass more comfortably under his head, and renewed

the wet bandages, she disappointed him by sitting down in the darkness again, behind his pillow, and only her voice guided him to picture the maternity growing in her eyes—that soft voice that forgot to be cross when she repeated her favourite poems, and that he never found monotonous for all its lack of training and elocution. There was no moon to light up the two figures, but the stars burned and shook all down the velvet heavens to the horizon, and hung so low out of the sky that it seemed as if they quivered with desire to reach the earth.

“Sweet and low, sweet and low
Wind of the western sea !”

The man stretched his hand out in the darkness with an instinctive movement, as if asking or offering sympathy. Perhaps it was too dark to see, or perhaps the girl did not care to respond ; for the groping fingers met with nothing but empty air. He watched till the last sweet words of the poem dropped into silence, and then he spoke again, with a subtlety she did not gauge.

“Leslie, did you remember to mark up the date ?”

“Oh, I am sorry !” said the girl remorsefully, shrinking back into her old sense of a neglected duty. “I forgot—and I’m afraid it’s too late to see now !”

“Never mind—I’ll remind you to-morrow. We shan’t forget either—it’s December 31st.”

“The last day of the year.”

“Let’s make a compact to be better friends, and not rag each other, and—and all that sort of thing, shall we ? We ought to make good resolutions for the New Year, you know !”

“Yes,” said the girl, and by her voice it was evident that she was softened again. “I know I’m ill-tempered—”

“And I’m rough with you. It’s six of one and half a dozen of the other, eh ? Well, there’s enough to try us in this life !”

She did not answer, and after a minute he said : “Will you shake hands on it ?”

Then she leaned towards him, and at last put her

hand into his. The two palms felt strange and hard in each other, roughened with work and coarsened with salt water. But their grip was honest, and for a minute the man's did not relax, but held her prisoner.

"Do you know that that's the first time we've shaken hands?" he said, as if it struck him as a little remarkable.

The girl pulled her hand away. "Good night!" she said abruptly.

CHAPTER VIII

"Sir, get you something of our purity,
And we will of your strength: we ask no more.
That is the sum of what seek we."

" **L**ESLIE!"

" Well?"

"Haven't you finished pottering round that old fish of yours yet?"

"No, I haven't. And if you want any supper you had better not hinder me!"

The words were called from a little distance, where the girl knelt at her evening task, for Trelawny still lay in the mouth of the cave on his couch of dried grass and fern, though he was propped up in a semi-recumbent position. His throat showed nothing now but a faint discolouration, but his ankle was still stretched out before him, and carefully bound up in its strange dressing of grass and leaves. The swelling had gone down, but he was afraid to trust his full weight on it, and could only crawl about, or hobble on a stick with Leslie's assistance.

She brought his food to him after a few minutes, and sat down with her own beside him.

"Do come and talk to me," he grumbled, as soon as the gourds were empty, and she showed signs of returning to her work of clearing up. "You don't know how tedious it is sitting here doing nothing."

"I'm coming in a minute——" Her voice vanished into the darkness of the cave, but she reappeared almost immediately and dropped on to the seaweed at his side, her hands clasping her knees. "I remembered the date just in time!" she said breathlessly.

"Good girl! What is it now?"

"The seventh of January."

"And I've been laid up a week!" he groaned. "I must begin to use this beastly foot soon."

"Don't be in a hurry," pleaded the girl anxiously. "If you did it permanent harm it would hamper you so!"

"That's true, I suppose." But he sighed wearily, and glanced at his bandaged foot as if he bore it a personal grudge. "I should like to tear down every vine and creeper in this brutal hole, and burn it!"

"Yes, and then we should have nothing to make nets of, or thread, or half a dozen other things! The vines have been more useful to us than the bark or cocoanut fibre. You'll have to practise patience this time. That's a woman's quality."

"Well, but women have so many occupations they can do sitting still," he protested. "Men never learn them as long as they are active. I tried to go on with that mat of yours to-day, and only bungled it. It seems to come naturally to you. I don't believe women are any more patient than men, really."

She did not see the argumentative trap, and fell into it. "We've got to be as a rule!" she said, a trifle bitterly. "If a man doesn't like a thing he just goes off and changes his life; but a woman has to stop where she is and endure it."

"Now, I wonder what experience made you say that!" said Trelawny kindly, with a half-quizzical look at the sunburnt face before him under the thick dark hair. There was health and strength and vigour now in the girl, in place of the sallow anaemia of her first appearance; but he was never misled into thinking her like a boy. It struck him as ludicrous that he should have forgotten her sex and called her Tommy for so long.

"I was thinking of my brothers," she confessed, a little shamefacedly. "It was all very well for them to be good—they were living just the life that they wanted, and doing the things that interested them. I had to stay at home and be good, hating every day, and never getting what I wanted!"

"And were you good?" asked Trelawny, with a twinkle in his eye.

"Oh, yes, I was good!" She tossed her dark mane with a little consciousness of virtue. "I never wasted my time in frivolous things, and I worked hard at my education, and I went to Meeting—"

He burst out laughing, and her face flamed. He was always offending and humiliating her, and, had she but known it, educating her as she had never been for all her book-learning.

"But, my dear child," he said more soberly, "that isn't being good. What possible advantage to you was it to go to chapel if you hated it?"

The beautiful glow in her face deepened still more, as her head drooped a little. She looked down at the sand which she was idly running through her fingers rather than at him. "It was all so unlovely!" she muttered, like a rebellious child. "I can read the Bible, and love it, but I don't like the prayers they gabble out—I don't!—I don't!— And if you ever do make yourself feel good, and seem to get right away into spiritual things, then there's all that chattering and gossiping and talking before one goes home, as if it were a tea party in chapel itself!"

Trelawny had never attended a Methodist service, and could hardly appreciate the mental picture in the girl's mind—the inevitable reunion after "Meeting," which to chapel people is really the event of the week. It was the æsthetic sense in her as much as the religious that was outraged by the little commonplaces of the conversation, and the tit-bits of local interest passing between her aunt and her neighbours in the chapel building itself; for the outward and visible sign meant as much to Leslie as the inward and spiritual grace.

It was her misfortune that Roman Catholicism or Mohammedanism were the needs of her nature rather than the extreme simplicity of the Methodists; and while she flattered herself that she was more religious than the community to which she belonged, she was only incapable of realizing their placid habit of combining their worship with daily life. What Trelawny did see was that the girl had been a fish out of water, what-

ever her circumstances, and he was good-humouredly sorry for her.

"Well, it sounds a cheerful way of going to church, any way!" he said amusedly. "What are you? Nonconformist?"

"My aunt was a Primitive Methodist——" Leslie hesitated. "My brothers were members of the Free Church of Scotland, and I just went with either one or the other, as I happened to be in England or Scotland."

"But that was very immoral of you! It seems to me you were all things to all men, and bowed in the house of Rimmon and all the rest of it!"

"Well, that's better than not going to service at all—as I suppose you did!" she burst out, fiery under his teasing, as usual.

"I don't see that at all. If you don't believe in a certain form of religion, it's hypocritical to attend its services and pretend that you do!"

"But—but——" she stammered, hampered with all the teaching of her little life, "it's *wrong* not to go to Meeting—to some church or chapel, anyway!"

"My dear child, it's much more wrong to insult God by lying!"

She stared at him helplessly, her eyes almost full of angry tears. He was tearing the solid ground from under her feet by such a doctrine; yet her honesty told her that he had probed down to the root of the wound. She *had* lied, every time that she had gone to chapel with rebellion in her heart, and subscribed to a service on which she inwardly threw scorn. If she had even sucked the sweetness out of it for herself, and rejected the dried husk of mere dogma, she would not have harmed her soul; but she had obstinately looked for the things that irritated her, and taken her stand on the ground of her own repulsion.

"Look here," said Trelawny kindly, "it seems to me that your view of life, and religion, and everything else, is all wrong. You've got to live and let live in this world. It's no good mounting all your conviction

on steel rods that won't accommodate themselves to circumstances. You'll only make yourself miserable if you do, and you'll get some awfully hard knocks before you find that everyone doesn't think alike."

"But if a thing is wrong, it's wrong," insisted the girl, clinging to her last defence. "You can't make wrong right."

"No, you can't. But you are not the supreme judge of Wrong and Right, are you?"

"I don't see what you mean."

"Well, it's no good your trying to impose your standard on the whole world, is it? You think certain things are wrong and right because you've been taught that way; but you've never even tried to prove them for yourself, have you?"

"I couldn't do wrong to try and find out if it were wrong!"

"No, I hope you couldn't," he assented quietly. "But when you see other people doing what you consider wrong you might try and look at it from their point of view, and remember their circumstances—oh, and a thousand things you can't know about them. I'm not arguing about legal crimes, such as murder and theft—we're all agreed that those must be punished because they're bad for the community. But when it's a question of moral choice you have no right to condemn on your own standard."

She looked at him and gasped. "But it's in the Bible!" she said feebly. "I mean, we have our authority there."

"Very well, then stick to the authority of the Bible for your line of conduct, if you believe in it—I should keep to the New Testament rather than the Old, if I were you, for charity's sake! But do remember that for the Mohammedan there is the Koran, and for the Jews the Talmud, and for the Buddhists the Patimokkha. You have no right to condemn any of them so long as they honestly believe in their creeds, and not in yours. They think they are doing right as much as you do."

"But they are heathens—my brothers are missionaries and go out to convert them!" said the girl confusedly, and certainly incorrectly.

"I dare say they do," retorted Trelawny dryly (he had seen something of mission work), "though I rather doubt the conversions. However, as long as they are honest in purpose and belief I have no doubt they are good men doing a good work. All I want you to remember is that until these people *are* converted, they are just as earnest as you in pursuing their own line of conduct—probably more so, considering what you have told me of your liking for the Methodist religion!"

Leslie was silent, trying to straighten the turmoil in her mind. She had often rebelled against certain tenets of her teaching, but she had never argued about them, because such argument would have been described as iniquity in itself by those who had trained and taught her. Trelawny's views were so bluntly sane that she found it difficult to confute them on the spur of the moment. Of course he was a worldling, and his thesis was specious and untenable; but she found that she lacked words to explain this to him. Her face was not sullen, however, it was only troubled and thoughtful; and after a shrewd look at her he left her to digest the new doctrine, and changed the conversation to another subject.

"I've been thinking that we've never really been all round the coast of our domain," he said, with a faintly bitter sigh at the designation. "I've actually been down to the shore on the west, north, and east, but I've only an idea of the south coast after all. When I can get about again, suppose we try to push through the scrub beyond the beacon?"

"But you can see from the northern cliffs that it is only bush right down to the water," objected Leslie with slight uneasiness. She had a secret fear of penetrating into the bush since Trelawny's accident. "We had far better follow the track you have already explored up the bed of the stream, and get the plantains. I shall come too, of course," she added hastily.

"So we will, and we'll go together. We always seem to get into mischief when we're apart, eh?" He laughed a little, and made a tentative motion towards her, as if he would hold out his hand. But Leslie's brown eyes were gazing steadily seawards, and it appeared that she did not see. He drew back as if slightly rebuffed, and his voice was more decided and crisper when he next spoke.

"Anyhow, we ought to know all we can about the Island. I tried to get round to the south-east once when I went straight through the Gorge. The cliffs are very high and quite unapproachable from the sea for a long way, and then on the south they give way to vegetation."

"What did you find?"

"I found a mangrove swamp, and struck inland again. But I have not tried it from the south-west, though it is nearer, because of the bush."

"I don't suppose we shall find anything but swamp," said the girl despondently. "But we'll go if you like."

"Mangrove is not bad timber," remarked Trelawny thoughtfully; "they used to use it a lot in Mauritius. If I wanted to run up a hut I'd as soon use that as anything—only I haven't a means of chopping it down."

"The caves do well enough," said Leslie consolingly. She was certainly growing more womanly in her instinct to soothe and encourage her companion, instead of giving way to the discontent and despair of her mental attitude when she first found herself a castaway. "We were very lucky to find shelter."

"We were very lucky to find anything, situated as we were! In every instance of a shipwrecked mariner I ever heard of, the poor wretch had at least the nucleus of a boat to build with, and a hatchet that served him for an axe. Our stock-in-trade consisted of a small pen-knife and my broken field-glasses!"

They looked at each other, and to their own surprise they laughed. It seemed impossible that their tragedy should become a comedy; yet the wonderful magicians

called Youth and Health are capable of strange transformations. Something in the life-giving air of the Island had gradually, and unknown to them, been revivifying their bodies so that they were dowered with a new hope and strength, and the gloom and horror refused to stay in their minds. Trelawny had seen the visible results in the girl's face and figure ; but they neither of them recognized its inevitable reaction upon their spirits.

" We know very little about each other even now, do we ? " said the man amicably, clasping his hands behind his roughened head, and looking contentedly at his companion as she sat beside him, still running the sand through her fingers in that restless fashion, as if the new life in her demanded movement of some sort even though she were resting. " Suppose we give each other a general confession ? Come—I'll start the cross-examination."

" All right," she said laconically. She did not look at him, and he wondered why the sand suddenly ran faster through the busy fingers. In her heart the girl was subtly excited, as at the stolen revel of a novel—for reading novels, save of a staid and standard quality, had been forbidden her at home. She suspected that there would be a fearful interest in Trelawny's experiences if she could only persuade him to tell her real truths of life. Of course she must condemn them—but she longed to hear.

" You're twenty-one, aren't you, and you have brothers who are missionaries—that's about all I know," he said lazily. " How many brothers were there ? "

" Three—but Alec, the youngest, died last year in Uganda."

" A missionary too ? "

" Yes." She spoke a trifle resentfully. There was something in his tone that roused a spirit of defiance in her, from loyalty if nothing else. " Robert, the eldest, is a minister in Fifeshire, but he is going to Africa next year, I think. And Donald and I have been in Queensland. We were going on to North-West

Australia—to the aborigines. We got as far as Port Darwin, but there we had to turn back."

"What made him take a girl on such an expedition!" said Trelawny wonderingly. "It must be rough enough for a man!"

"It was when Aunt Minnie died," the girl explained, still with a faint reluctance in her tone. "I had always lived with her, at Edgbaston, near Birmingham, you know. And I had never been strong—"

"An excellent reason for taking you to the 'Never-never' country, and putting you through hardships that have killed pioneers!"

"David thought the sea-voyage would be good for me, and he wanted a woman to help him"—she thrust the explanation at him hotly, as if some traitor in herself were in danger of agreeing to his common sense. "He wasn't married—"

"Yes, but to take a girl—a mere child—and a delicate one at that, into such a life! Why, you were all amongst the mining camps!" The man's chivalry was up in arms, and the girl's heart gave a little responsive throb. She was ashamed to feel the tears pricking in her eyes, and bent her head still more to hide them. It was the suggested protection of his attitude, however, that prompted her next wistful question.

"Have you any sisters?"

"Two, both married. We'll come to them presently. I want to know about you first."

She sighed a little, thinking what a wonderful time a girl would have with a brother like Miles Trelawny—and then hated herself for the disloyalty. He was a worldling, who openly decried religion, and her brothers were good men, devoted to a cause so high that it had thrown her back on her own shortcomings in despair.

"I wasn't much use in Australia," she said honestly, feeling the humiliation of the confession as he could not guess. "I was always being ill, and I couldn't do much teaching, or get the women to talk to me. I was afraid of them—particularly in the mining camps"—

her truthfulness flared up like a torch, and her voice shook with sudden passion—"and I hated the whole life! I even longed to be back at Edgbaston, though I had hated that at the time—"

"Poor little soul! you do seem to have had a rough time!" he said kindly. The young, stunted life, fenced in with dreary religion, and denied all natural outlets in the name of God—as he shrewdly suspected—struck him as pitiful. With a growing generosity, partly due to a new interest, it is true, he forgave Leslie Mackelt all her faults and shortcomings on account of that brief outline of her history. She had never had a chance, in his good-humoured masculine phrase, and he would have liked to make it up to her in the simplest and most material way. What did actually pass through his mind indeed was that she ought to have a good time in London, and to go to theatres and dances and have pretty frocks and much attention—just to make it up to her, and to develop the cramped impulses of her feminine nature—and the ludicrous side of such an aspiration on a desert island did not occur to him.

"Well, what brought you home again?" he asked.
"Was it your health?"

"Oh, no!" she said, rather surprised that such an unimportant detail should be supposed to interfere with Donald's high calling. "We were coming home because we had some money left to us, and Donald had to arrange about it with Robert. We decided to come right round and home by Vancouver, because the property was in Canada and we had to see some lawyers there."

"Some money left you!" said Trelawny, catching at the practical suggestion. "Come! that's the first cheerful thing that seems to have happened to you. I hope you shared with your brothers?"

"Oh, yes—we all inherited alike. It was a great deal of money, and needed a lot of arrangement, otherwise I don't think we should have troubled to come home."

"A fortune!" said Trelawny gaily, wondering what few thousands would constitute "a great deal of money" to the narrow, frugal Scotchmen and their strait-laced sister. "And are you an heiress?"

"It comes from the Mackelt Railways in Canada," said Leslie simply. "I dare say you have heard of them—Donald Mackelt was our uncle, and he died unmarried. It all comes to us."

For a minute Trelawny stared at her in blank silence, trying to realize what she had said. The sensation of the financial world three or four months since had been the demise of the great railway magnate of North-East Canada, and the discovery of his right to innumerable millions. That one man could have had such vast interests and so much money, without his being bracketed with Rockefeller and Pierpont Morgan, had seemed incredible to the money-making world; but the grim old Scotchman had kept the secret of his possessions till his death and only the published figures had informed the public of the results of a lifetime of industry and financial genius.

"Do you mean the Mackelt millions?" said Trelawny slowly.

"Yes."

"Is it possible!"

"Yes, really. Donald Mackelt *was* our uncle, and he left it to us." She seemed to feel that his incredulity was quite pardonable, and to find a difficulty in proving her assertion. "Of course my brothers felt how much this would mean to their calling, and how greatly it would help the work, and therefore they were not neglecting it, even though we had to give it up for a time and go home. Donald hoped to be out again next year, anyway."

"Do you mean that he meant to devote his whole fortune to mission work?"

"Oh, yes, I think so."

Trelawny relapsed into discomforted silence for a minute or two. Something of the Temptation in the Wilderness, with all the treasures of the world spread

at the feet of the typical Man, was suggested to his mind by the analogy of this fanatical young missionary and the Mackelt millions. The brother who would not spare his own sister to his work was not likely to reserve his own wealth ; but Trelawny was irritatingly conscious that though he ought to admire the devotion, it struck him as fanatical still. Another thought occurred to him, to make the situation still more interesting.

"Had your brother made a will since he came into this money ? "

"No, I don't think so—no, I am sure he had not, because, you see, we really did not know how much it was. We were going home to talk it over with Robert, and then Donald said that even *I* must make a will, as I am of age."

Trelawny thought of the strange happening that had brought him and Leslie Mackelt to the Island, and the unknown fate of the *Aristo*. Supposing the force that had hurled them on to this lonely shore had doomed the ship, and that Donald Mackelt was no longer among living men, the enormous wealth would be still further divided between the surviving brother Robert and the little ragged figure at his side—a curious thing to think of since there seemed every possibility of her living and dying a castaway, while her millions awaited her beyond her grasp. But he would not put such ideas into her head—for the death of her brother would be a new trouble if he suggested it—and so he spoke still more cheerfully to distract her from such a contingency.

"Well, at all events you are not bound to support a mission with *your* fortune, I suppose. You meant to have a good time at last like other girls, didn't you ? "

But she turned her head away dully, and somewhat to his surprise.

"I don't know. I expect I should have done as they advised."

"Your brothers ? But surely you were not bound by

their convictions—particularly if you had no special zest for missions yourself!"

"That was just why—" The sand ran through the little fingers faster and faster, and she turned to him at last with her breast rising and falling and the words tumbling over each other in her passion. "I didn't want to give it all to God!—I know it's right—I know I'm wrong—but I have lain awake at nights—up in the bush—and bitten my lips till the blood came! I wanted to do as I liked with it—to do wicked things if I liked—anything, so that I had my own way for once. You can't understand—you've always been free—no one would think it wrong for you. And yet even that wouldn't make it right. But don't think I'm good—don't think I want to devote myself or anything I have to Christianity—I'm bad, bad all through, when I think of it. And yet I should have to—"

Her voice trailed away into the old despondence, and the old sullenness came back into her face.

Ludicrous as her outcry was in some of its expressions, he did not want to laugh. She might be nearly inarticulate in her struggle to show him her inner mind, but what struck him more was the astounding simplicity of her point of view. It was Right to devote a life and fortune to what had been taught her was a great cause; it was Wrong to push duty on one side and satisfy the natural craving for the good things of this world, because that was self-indulgence. Well, so it was. In theory he could not deny that the ethics of her point of view were quite in order—acknowledging oneself as a unit of Christianity; in practice he was aware that ninety-nine persons out of a hundred would evade the obligation, translate the teaching of their religion in a more lenient manner, or refuse flatly to deny themselves and take up such a cross—himself among the number.

Furthermore, there was a purity of outlook in Leslie Mackelt, however narrow he might consider her training, that confused him, man of the world though he

was. He was conscious that almost anyone, certainly he himself, would have raged at fortune all the more for casting him here, out of the world, just as he had become possessed of the power to enjoy the world. Even to one auditor he would have spoken of his own importance as the possessor of millions, and while on shipboard the pleasant celebrity of such wealth would certainly have hung about him. But no one had known anything of the Mackelts' claim to attention ; and Leslie had never spoken of her fortune—apparently never thought specially of it—since they had been together, until it emerged from the train of circumstances in her brief history. Such a lack of earthly pride no doubt came from her brother's teaching and her own severe training ; but it was none the less humiliating to Trelawny.

Hitherto the advantage had been mainly on his side. He had found his companion narrow-minded, uncharitable, bounded by theological conventions, and had been partly aware that the enforced companionship with himself was educating her and rubbing the corners off her characters by very friction. Now he found that he had something to learn in his turn. That singleness of purpose !—that simple seeing of a duty as a duty, with no alternative !—How long it seemed since he had lost the very sound of the words ! He found no consolation to offer to the girl's outburst for a minute, and sat looking at her helplessly.

"I do so long for pretty things !" she went on, in that lower, shamed voice, as if offering him a timid excuse. "You don't know how much it means to me. I've really tried to think that it doesn't matter, but when I see other girls in lovely clothes, and think what it feels like to wear them, I go just as wild and jealous and angry ! I think it's the *feeling* of things I want most—to touch silk and velvet and lace, oh, and all beautiful things !—it's such a joy !"

"You poor little pagan !" he said at last huskily, recognizing the unbalanced love of Beauty in her at last. So many women whom he knew would have

called it an artistic temperament, and rather boasted of it than not, that he felt it horribly pathetic. "And you never had it?"

"Yes, that is what I am—a pagan—a heathen!" She caught savagely at the phrase. "The very reverse of what I ought to be. No, I never had it. I wanted to hear beautiful music, to see pieces at the theatre—all the worst pieces, just to know what they were like. I dare say I should have enjoyed them all the more for their being bad," she ended defiantly. "But I wanted an orgy of the senses."

He almost laughed at the melodramatic phrase, wondering where she had picked it up. But he had regained his mental superiority a little with the very childishness of her outburst.

"No, you wouldn't," he said firmly. "Your mind is much too clean to like vile things for their vileness. But I dare say you would have enjoyed theatres and concerts and pretty clothes, and quite innocently too. If we were only in London—"

He stopped short, as suddenly as if a hand had been laid on his lips. For all round them stretched the solitude of the very wilderness, and upon their ears broke the booming of the surf on the outer reef—that fortress wall of their prison! It was so savagely lonely that it cowed him, in contrast to the apex of civilization that his mind had conjured up.

"If we were in London," said the girl, with a soft cynicism that he did not recognize, "you would be with your own friends, leading your own life, and we should be further set apart than if we were at the two Poles! Tell me about yourself, now."

"There is nothing to tell you that you don't know, I think. I have very few relations, except the best old father that ever was and the two sisters I mentioned who are both married and not very young—both older than I am, anyway. I've been acting as the Governor's *aide* out in Mauritius, until I got my majority, and now I am going home—was going home, I mean—to be married."

"Oh!" said the girl a little blankly. She seemed more surprised than anything else—not disappointed, or to have lost her interest with the introduction of another woman, but simply surprised, as if such a factor had never entered into her calculations. Then, as if she felt she must say something, she added shyly, "What is she like?"

"Her name is Edna Carrington, and we have known each other about ten years——"

The big brown eyes in the sunburnt face opened wide and obviously, even in the growing darkness. "You haven't been engaged all *that* time, surely!" she said in open dismay.

"Oh, no"—he laughed, a little as if against his will—"only six months, as it happens, and it's only been announced since I knew I was going home. We didn't want it unnecessarily discussed all over the family."

"You haven't told me what she is like?" said Leslie Mackelt after another pause, during which she remembered that engaged people could write to each other, and wondered with a little throb of heart what it was like to receive a love-letter!

"She is tall and fair," said Trelawny, "with a very good figure. I'm afraid I can't catalogue her any further!"

"I beg your pardon!" The quick, wounded voice betrayed how sensitive Leslie Mackelt was to a snub. He had often made her flinch so, and she had never quite grown used to it. "I did not mean to be inquisitive—I was only very interested."

"You weren't inquisitive," he said, a little remorseful because of some inexplicable irritation in himself that had made him speak unkindly. "But it is a little impossible to describe Edna. She has very blue eyes, and a charming smile, and she looks at her best in her habit—she is a great horsewoman. There! will that satisfy your feminine love of a romance?"

"I can—I can imagine her!" said the girl a little breathlessly. She could, in very truth, as a direct

opposite to herself—"tall and fair, with blue eyes and a charming smile," while she herself could hardly be described as tall—she was only a slim, growing thing, with a sallow skin (so she remembered herself in the looking-glasses of lost civilization) and eyes like the brown shallows of a stream. Well, even the men of her own restricted world had never admired Leslie Mackelt. It was not possible that such a far-off and splendid specimen as Major Trelawny had been could have done so! "Yes, I can quite imagine her!" she said. "Is she as pretty as Mrs. Gellert?"

"Mrs. Gellert!" he repeated, amazed. "Who on earth is Mrs. Gellert?"

"Why, she was on board the *Aristo*! That lovely woman you always talked to."

"Oh, that woman on the ship—yes, her husband was commanding a regiment in Mauritius," he said, a trifle discomfited. May Gellert had been such a passing attraction that it was totally unexpected to have the ghost of an old flirtation rise up here, and the indictment to come out of Leslie Mackelt's mouth. "Why did you think I talked to her especially?" he said.

"Why, you did! I used to see you together, so often. And they called her the May Queen on board, and she was lovely!" said Leslie, genuine at least in her admiration.

"She was a good-looking woman," Trelawny admitted, "and she must have been a very pretty girl—once. I don't remember talking to her more than to other people, though. It's so odd that I never saw you on board, Leslie," he added, turning from the subject of Mrs. Gellert with unconscious relief. "We must have passed each other hundreds of times. And you say you knew me by sight?"

But to his surprise the girl suddenly sprang to her feet. "It's not odd at all!" she said curtly. "It's the only thing that could have happened. I am ugly and dark and dowdy—the less people that see me the better. I'm going to bed—good-night."

She was brushing past him to reach the inner cave, but he caught her hand a minute, dexterously.

"You are not ugly, at any rate," he said in the teasing tone that never failed to make her furious. "Dark—yes, you are rather a 'nut-brown maid'—as to dowdy, I've never seen you in anything but the most picturesque rags! And anyhow, you oughtn't to fish for compliments, when you know I can't help myself!"

She snatched her hand away, quivering. "I didn't—I don't care what you say! How dare you!" And she was gone with a bound that would have done credit to a wild stag.

Trelawny lay on his back, looking up at the stars, with a sudden pleasurable quickening of his blood. It was so pleasurable, and so distracting from the weary monotony of despair and rebellion at the fate that had cast him on the Island, that he would not question it or struggle against it. He lay still and enjoyed the new sensation, with half-closed eyes that were yet very far from asleep, and despite his stiffened ankle he felt that his whole body was light and easy with such perfect health as he had never felt since he was a boy.

Some ten minutes later a bare foot stole across the dried seaweed from the back of the cave, scarcely crackling it.

The man's eyes closed at once, and he lay as if asleep, while gentle fingers renewed the bandages once more about his foot, and some presence that was too shadowy to be seen raised his head cautiously to turn and heap his improvised pillow. Then she laid him down again, and stole away as she had come; while he heard, for all revelation, the light sound of a girl's sigh caught back between her lips.

And the silence and the sweetness and the longing went on as before.

CHAPTER IX

“ A grim grey coast, and a seaboard ghastly,
And shores trod seldom by feet of men—
Where the battered hull and the broken mast lie
They have lain embedded these long years ten.
Love ! when we wandered here together,
Hand in hand through the sparkling weather,
From the heights and hollows of fern and heather,
God surely loved us a little then ! ”

ADAM LINDSAY GORDON.

TERELAWNYS ankle took another week or so to mend before he ventured to use it amongst the slippery stones of the stream or the rough growth along its banks ; but with Leslie's help he at length reached the place he had noticed before, and got possession of the coveted plantains and their suckers. The latter he planted with some care and labour in a favourable spot nearer to the caves, and both he and his companion watered and tended them, though they could not hope for any result until the following year. The planting of the plantains marked a new stage in their lives on the Island, however—it suggested the first acknowledgment of resignation to their lot. Hitherto their frantic hope of rescue had made them shrink from any deliberate care for the future, with a kind of latent superstition that it was unlucky. All their efforts at comfort had been for the immediate present, and they had agreed that it was not worth while to think for the morrow beyond their daily necessities, while they strained their eyes for the mere hope of a sail.

But the little patch of plantains meant more than the employment that they both clung to as a panacea for the Solitude-Madness. It meant that they could contemplate another stretch of days and weeks and

months without change, locked in the green of their prison by the outer reefs and the booming seas. When Trelawny said, "If these fruit, it will save our going so far to fetch them," and the girl assented listlessly, they were digging the grave of Hope, though as yet she only lay sickening for her last long illness. The plantains flourished, and began to grow in a very short time, with the magical ease of that virgin soil and productive climate.

Another and more obvious change had come over the castaways, though as yet it was only beginning, and its indications were not noticeable to each other. Trelawny was able to take up his share of the work again, and fished in the rock pools, or used his sling in the Gorge where birds were most numerous ; the girl was occupied at her mats and rope-making, working with busy fingers to fashion some awkward kind of substitute by the time their clothes were really in rags ; but both toiled as if with a certain joy in the work, born of their unfettered limbs and increasing health, and no longer with the sole craving for employment to keep them sane. And at sunset, when the time came for the evening meal, the man would come home weary but content, and the girl would turn as though satisfied to hear his step. They were companions through misfortune, but they talked or differed now as friends. Trelawny, looking at Leslie by the glow of the dying fire, wondered if she guessed the physical change in herself. It was not only that her body had taken a stronger mould, and her limbs become round and firm instead of thin and flaccid ; but the brown eyes were deep and satisfied with peace, as if the hunger of her little hot soul were stilled for the time at least, and her young mouth curved happily as if she found it easier to smile. These things he noticed and approved ; but there being no looking-glass, he did not speculate upon the serenity of his own expression, or miss the hunted terror of a few weeks back.

At last their long-deferred project of exploring the south coast-line was considered safe for Trelawny's

ankle, and they started at daybreak, one morning in February according to Trelawny's calendar, for long expeditions were always arranged to time with the cool of the day, and noontide was set aside for rest. Their way lay over the cliff past the beacon, and as they skirted the now imposing pile the first long ripples of light shot out across the crest of the hills and trembled upon the sea, though they themselves were still in shadow. Leslie halted, leaning on her staff, and looked at the faint flushing sky with an expression in her eyes too subtle for her companion to read.

"Pretty, isn't it?" said Trelawny, pausing in his turn. But his quick gaze was moving from the sea and sky to the sombre wooded line along the coast, whither they were going, and he was thinking as much of the denseness of the mangrove swamp as of the sunrise.

"It's so perfect—it can't ever be as perfect again!" said the girl to herself, half aloud. "In a few minutes it will be very bright and beautiful, but it won't be—this!" Her serious eyes seemed to catch some reflection of that faint trembling glow upon the waters—the mere suggestion of warmth, the herald of rapture. "It's the beginning of things that is always the nicest," she said, unconsciously.

"It's going to be hot enough down there later on," agreed Trelawny practically. "Come along—we'd better make the most of the dawn. It's the best time, as you say."

He turned away from the sea and struck off down the cliffs inland, to plunge into the dark growth beneath. The girl followed him, with a queer little glance, half shy and half amused, at the broad shoulders before her under their tattered shirt. She seemed a little sad too, for she sighed. But he did not hear her.

The line Trelawny meant to take led them straight into the bush and on over increasingly difficult land until they skirted the edge of the swamp. It took a long time to make their way through the mile or so of vegetation to the seashore, and when they reached

the swamp it was still very dusk, for the mangroves grew up to a hundred feet high—splendid growths of trees, as Trelawny's knowledge told him, and valuable as timber. But the plantation was not large enough to make it worth while to establish a colony on the Island for purposes of trade, he supposed ; or else, as seemed likely, the barrier of the reef had proved too great a protection. Either the approach was so dangerous that no ship had dared to come there, or the place was absolutely undiscovered and uncharted.

"I want to find some place on the shore where we can sit down and eat our fruit," Trelawny said. "I'm getting hungry, aren't you ? It must be nearly ten o'clock."

"Yes, I suppose it's light enough outside, though it's so dark here," responded Leslie, planting her staff with caution, and drawing back from the treacherous oozy ground.

"I'm afraid we must retrace our steps a little, and skirt the swamp. We ought not to have come when the tide is coming in—this will be all mud-flats when the water goes down on the shore. Are you very tired ? Let me see if I can help you." He shifted the plantains and other fruit that he carried slung over his shoulder and passed his hand under her warm arm. His support would have lifted her much more lightly over the sticky ground ; but something in his proximity seemed to stifle the girl in the close gloom of the trees, or else he gripped her arm too tightly, for she gasped and gave a little cry :

"I don't mind the walk—but I want to get out of this ! Let's push on—quick ! It's a fever place, isn't it ? And I can't bear this smell !" She dragged her little feet distastefully out of the black mud.

He laughed a little, but did not relax his hold. "You don't expect mangroves to smell like eau-de-Cologne, do you ? They'll be worse at low water. But you won't get fever—don't rush on so ! "

But she would not be stayed, and forced her way back again until the thick growth became thinner,

and there were only a few stragglers between them and the broad bright day. So wading and clinging to the roots for foothold, they emerged out of the swamp on to a narrow strip of sand beyond which lay the blue sea, glittering back the splendour of the tropical day. Leslie paused for a minute, out of breath and very hot, for even the skirts of the mangrove swamp had been like a vapour bath, and in her exertions to get out she had spared neither herself nor Trelawny. She stood still a minute, blinking at the bright seascape before her, and then she uttered a long, strange cry.

“Look! look!—a stranded ship! a wreck!”

The little bay whence they had emerged was so small a creek that it had been easily hidden from a long-distance view by the mangrove swamp; the more so because of a curious formation in the cliffs to the south-west. They were hollowed out as if by the action of incessant waves, so that the cliff-side hung over and shielded half the tiny bay from view until actually on the shore. On the south-east the coast was less precipitous, but it seemed that some storm or volcanic eruption had torn portions of the hollowed cliff away and flung them out into the water, for two great rocks, nearly conical in shape, guarded the mouth of the bay like grinning jaws; and it was between these two, wedged in as tightly as though by the force of machinery, that there lay the remains of a stranded ship.

She was, or had been, a small schooner, of a hundred and fifty tons, three-masted and probably square-rigged on the foremast. But the dreadful storm that had driven her into those iron jaws had denuded her of masts and rigging, and the constant seas had swept her until she was almost waterlogged. She lay heavily over to starboard, with a great hole stove in her bows near the foremost bulkhead; but it would have taken as great a storm as had driven her into the clutch of those rocks to get her out again; and over and around her flew flocks of sea-birds, in greater quantities than the castaways had yet seen them, diving in the sea that washed her helpless stern and wheeling round her broken

masts, but always returning to the wet decks. It seemed as if they had gathered in a crowd on one particular spot, 'midships, so white a patch did they make.

There is nothing so hideously forlorn as a stranded ship, or so suggestive of the helplessness of humanity faced with the unbounded forces of Nature. The poor decks, sea-swept and purposeless in the great tropic day, seemed more desolate than the desolate Island; the broken masts lifted themselves in vain to a pitiless heaven—the few stays and shrouds flapping idly about the battered hull made her like a ruined woman with her rags fluttering in the wind. Abandoned by man, her master, she fell back into the sphere of rottenness, and was the more hideous by contrast to her fancied beauty under full sail. Leslie Mackelt, gazing at her in her wreckage, lost the first impression of a link with civilization, and saw only her pathos and desertion.

"Oh, the poor thing! the poor thing!" she cried, as if it were a vital misery that she looked on, and dropping down on the sands she buried her face in her hands, crying bitterly.

Trelawny had not spoken, but from his very heart as it were the breath tore its way in one great sob, and he stood staring—staring at the wreck. It lay so close to the land as to be nearly beached; but when the tide was full, as now, the water ran deep between it and the sloping shore, and laughed and rippled round the stern. At low tide it seemed probable that one might wade over and climb on board with little difficulty.

When at last the man spoke there was almost a wondering bitterness in his tone.

"And she's been lying here ever since we came, and we never knew it!"

Then his eyes fell on the girl, crouched at his feet on the sand, and he knelt down quickly and laid his hand on her shoulder. She could feel it tremble a little, as if with excitement. "Leslie," he said, "don't cry! What's the matter—dear?"

"Oh, I don't know!" she gasped, her face still hidden. "Only it looked so like—us!"

"Yes, I know," he said confusedly, but he did not quite know, his brain being less sensitive to such imagery.

"But don't cry—don't you see that it means that men have been here before, that we are not quite desolate?"

She raised her head and looked at the wreck with a shudder. "They abandoned her!" she said in a low voice. "They never came here! There are no boats—"

"That's true!" he muttered—for the davits, twisted and bent as they were, showed no signs of the boats having been carried away by the storm. They had probably been cleared of this one hope of safety before the ship was driven on to the rocks. "That's true—they took to the boats out at sea, and she was driven here afterwards. But it means that there is traffic in these waters—we are not out of the trade routes!" And his voice rose to triumphant hope again. "Come out of the sun, and let's get into the shelter of these cliffs, where you can wash your feet in the rock pools," he went on coaxingly, remembering his companion. "We must stay here till low tide, and then we can get on board and see what she was and where she came from. At least I can—"

"I shall go if you do!" Leslie said, with a sudden sharp fear in her voice.

"Very well, we'll go together." He spoke soothingly, as if to a child who must be indulged, and putting his arms round her lifted her to her feet. She followed him sullenly to the deep shadow of the cliff, and there they sat down to eat their fruit and watch their new treasure, lying just out of reach in the sunny bay: but Leslie was curiously subdued, and hardly entered into Trelawny's speculations and hopes.

"They can't have taken everything with them. Leslie, do you realize that we may find tools?"

"We may find clothes—of sorts!" said the girl, with a little glance down at her tattered knees and muddied feet. "I suppose all the food is rotted, or eaten by the fishes."

"It depends on the storage, and what part of her is under water. There might be some tinned stuff. I'm afraid the water will have got into the hold—I wonder what her cargo was? Leslie, do you know I believe this accounts for the hen!"

"The hen!"

"Yes, our phantom hen. Don't you see they were sure to have live stock—at least fowls—and that one poor lean wretch managed to get ashore. How she escaped the snakes and rats I don't know. All her eggs must have been sucked, or if she had a brood they couldn't be raised."

"Then it really *was* a hen, after all!"

She laughed almost hysterically, but his amusement was more natural. The advantage was all with him, for the discovery of the ship set his energies to work and gave him something to think about; whereas the girl had a new mental attitude that troubled her and a fancy against which she struggled vainly that the ship cast a shadowy barrier between them. It was only the extraordinary position that they were in that had forced them into companionship, as she recognized. Had they remained in the civilized social world, nothing could or would have forged a link between her existence and Miles Trelawny's. Their circumstances, their upbringing—their very instincts, it seemed, were against it. And they might have remained on the same boat, in the same town, even in the same hotel, for months or years, and never even spoken. Now the stranded ship brought them into touch with their old divided lives again, and made her feel her insufficiency as he never dreamed of her doing. It reminded her that with the gain of rescue must come the loss of this new friendship, and it was an experience infinitely more exciting and full of glamour to the girl than to the man, in all aspects save the one of personal attraction. Trelawny loomed a much larger figure on her narrow horizon than he would have done on Mrs. Gellert's, for instance. He was almost magical, a Prince Charming, in the attributes she gave him; and despite her struggle to

keep her mental superiority, she was rapidly withdrawing her claim even to that, and perhaps humbled herself unduly in the other extreme.

The tide had been on the turn when they emerged in sight of the ship, and Trelawny calculated that within two or three hours it would be low enough to enable them to wade out and board her. They employed the tedious waiting in getting rid of the black, smooth mud of the mangrove swamp, washing their feet in the salt pools ; but the man was impatient to begin his investigations, for it would then be two o'clock, and at that time of the year the sun set at six or seven. They dared not linger after he was far down the heavens if they meant to reach the cave again before dark, for there was the mangrove swamp to skirt and a mile or so of the bush to penetrate before they reached the western shore, added to which they hardly knew their way as yet, and could not gauge the distance as Trelawny did in the more familiar Gorge. As soon, therefore, as he judged that the water would not be more than breast-high he proposed making the attempt, though he urged Leslie to stay behind on the rocks and wait his return. She was not to be deterred, however.

" If you go, I shall go too," she said obstinately, and he perforce allowed her to follow him into the water.

The shore sloped gradually for the first thirty yards or so, and then fell abruptly, so that Trelawny found himself rather suddenly in deeper water. He looked round anxiously for the girl behind him, and offered to take her hand ; but she was plodding doggedly on, and the ebbing tide did not reach above her waist, nor would she accept assistance. He asked her could she swim, and she said yes, but he was relieved that this was not necessary, though once he found himself in a hole that soused him to the armpits, and he uttered an exclamation of thankfulness when he felt that he had reached what must be the base of the shattered rocks, and almost tripped up and stumbled against their crests rising clear of the water. For a few minutes he could hardly get a foothold, and cried out to his

companion to stop where she was ; then he clutched some of the broken rigging that hung over the side of the ship itself, and gripping the netting, clambered over the gunwale and jumped on to the deck, which was still wet and slippery from the daily inflow of the tide. His appearance disturbed the sea-birds, and he nearly started back from the whirr of wings as they rose screaming and beating their pinions upon all sides of him. Then he saw that they had nested on the deserted ship, and that the hatches were literally covered with their nests. He was so taken up with the extraordinary scene they made that for the moment he forgot the girl, and when he turned she had reached the ship's side and was looking for a foothold to follow him.

"Take care, Leslie ! Give me your hand," he called, mounting on the bollard to hang over the gunwale. But Leslie was light and active, and made hardly more of the boarding than he had done himself. With the salt water dripping from their tattered clothes they stood at last, breathless and triumphant, on the steep slope of the deck, and so strange did anything made by man feel to their bare feet that for a minute it seemed as if they could hardly keep their balance. They stood where, presumably, the fresh water had been stored, but even the iron tank had got adrift, and only the staples and lashings which secured it were left as evidence that something had been there. The harness cask, where the salt junk is kept, had rolled over, and the lid was off, showing the inside empty and mildewed. The galley had been partly wrecked by the falling mainmast, and that it had not been entirely so was due to the spar deck taking the brunt of the damage, but there were no spars there now, of course—the storm had swept them overboard long before it took the masts out of the schooner, and the boats were gone as well. Abaft the mainmast was a small cabin where apprentices might be berthed, and this had practically escaped damage ; but Trelawny was bent on some definite discovery as to the ship's voyage and destination, and he knew he would not find it there.

"Let's get aft, and see what she was and where she was going," he said impatiently at last. "There ought to be some sort of rough log, if it isn't washed away."

He felt his way along the scuppers and climbed by the broken ladder on to the poop, which was still slippery with salt water, though the bows were high and dry above the inroads of the tides. The schooner had indeed the appearance of a very drunken man who cannot keep his balance and has fallen on his side, but still holds his head in the air. On the poop, which caught the full force of the waves, remained the ruins of what had been the binnacle, but there was nothing else, and he lowered himself again to the level of the deck, where, under the break of the poop, stood the wheel-house and a small locker; the salt water had rusted the hinges and oozed into it, so that when, after an effort, he forced the lid up, he was disappointed to find that the papers he sought were all but illegible. The rough log kept on deck was but a brief record in pencil at best, and of this half was so soaked and caked with salt that he could not decipher it. All that he could make out was the schooner's name—the *Golden Gate*—and some record of weather and latitude that he was hardly seaman enough to understand. Even the date of the final entry was obliterated, but he put the book carefully aside to dry in the sun, with the faint hope of perusing it further at his leisure. The girl had stood by in silence while he made his investigations, and only spoke when he abandoned his useless study of the soaked pages.

"Well?" she said shortly.

"She's the *Golden Gate*—sails from San Francisco most likely, but I can hardly make out anything. We'll take some of these charts and the book back with us and see what we can make of them."

"What are you going to do now?"

"Get into the captain's cabin if I can, and look for the real log—the ship's log. By Jove! I hope they didn't take it with them! Come along, Leslie,—this is exploring with a vengeance."

The girl was so ignorant of sailing ships that she

could not tell if the master would berth aft or for'ard, but she followed Trelawny passively, as he turned to the three small cabins below the poop, where the officers presumably berthed. There were two on the port side and one on the starboard, and Trelawny tried the door of the latter. It swung idly to his hand, as though the lock had long since lost its uses, and nearly precipitated him into more water and a scene of utter desolation. Owing to the lie of the ship the berth was under water, and the discoloured rags that lay on it had become a home for strange and repulsive life innumerable. Where the drawers under the bunk had been, seaweed and barnacles had gradually made a loathsome covering, so that he had to tear them away to get hold of the handles, and anemones had grown and died upon the walls, making a faint fishy stench in the air. There was little hope of finding anything worth preserving, but over the washstand, and just above the line of the encroaching water, hung a square of looking-glass, very dim and dirty but unbroken. Trelawny peered at it as an object never encountered before, and saw a strange sight—a bearded face, burnt brick-red, with tangled hair under a roughly woven head-gear that was more like an inverted basket than a hat (for Leslie was not yet skilful with her fingers), and withal a robuster, more savage version of himself than he had even seen. For a moment he did not recognize his own face, and swung round quickly to meet the thing he fancied behind him ; but there was only the patient figure of the girl waiting a few yards off on the upward slope of the deck.

“Don’t come in here, Leslie !” he called brusquely. “The water is foul, and the place smells—pah !”

“Come out yourself, then !” said the girl quickly.

“In a minute—I must see what is in these drawers.” He made shift to feel with his hands, for there was little light, and he was hampered by the water and the seaweed ; but he jerked the drawer open at last, and dragging out some of the contents he staggered towards the doorway again to examine his treasures. They were mouldy and rotting, but climbing up the steep

deck, out of the wet, he and the girl looked at them together. A suit of blue serge, some flannel shirts, and a pair of white duck trousers—all stiff with salt, discoloured past belief, and smelling vilely—that was all. “There is more beneath,” said Trelawny with set lips. “I must go back——”

“Wait—let us try that cabin behind the mast,” said the girl quickly, pointing to the little structure abaft the galley where the sea had evidently not been able to penetrate. “At least that cannot be under water——

Trelawny abandoned his search a little reluctantly. Even the clothes were a find supposing that they could be sufficiently soused in fresh water and dried in the sun to make them wearable, and did not fall to pieces in the process. He had not told her of the looking-glass, either; but he remembered it for a purpose already dawning in his mind.

“Well,” he said, spreading his burden of evil-smelling clothes carefully over the gunwale to dry in the sun, “come along, if you like.”

The cabin abaft the galley was not so easy to enter, for the door had actually been shut, and had jammed. Moreover, the slant of the deck was so great that Trelawny could barely stand upright, and he was for abandoning it and going back to the captain’s cabin, when it showed signs of yielding. Leslie added her small strength to his, and together they wrenched it open far enough to get in, finding that the girl’s surmise had been right and that it was at least dry and watertight.

It seemed stranger still to stand in that little place, some time inhabited by a human being, and abandoned for how long they could not tell, but undoubtedly just as he had left it. There were mute signs of a hurried flight—almost at the moment when it was decided to take to the boats, perhaps—for the bedclothes on the berth were half flung on the floor, and a strong trunk of American make that had been left behind was unstrapped and unlocked. It bore the initials “G.I.” and had evidently been hurriedly cleared of clothing or

valuables of some sort. But its mere presence suggested a new idea to Trelawny. The officers of the ship would not have used such a place to keep their clothes or personal belongings—they would use the lockers and chests assigned to them. Furthermore, this was not a cabin belonging to the mates, though it might have been intended for apprentices, for it had two bunks.

"Leslie," he said, "the *Golden Gate* carried one passenger at least—let us see what he left behind him."

They knelt down on the sloping floor and opened the trunk. A large cockroach ran almost over their hands, causing Leslie to give a suppressed shriek and fling herself to the further wall, but save for these noisome insects the belongings of G.I. remained intact. Neither rats nor sea monsters had injured them, and allowing for the inevitably musty smell the clothes were very much as this unlooked-for traveller had packed them. They consisted of other things besides clothes, for which Trelawny was frankly sorry—curios picked up in most parts of the world, it would seem, for there was a beautiful shawl of Indian pattern, and a Zulu petticoat ornamented with lines and lines of buttons, that had come from East Africa; some fine carved ivory from China, a strip of embroidery from Japan, a length of some strange cloth with a branch pattern that Trelawny thought came from the Sandwich Islands, besides some little bottles and boxes containing what seemed bits of stick or rock; all were packed between soft linen shirts and flannel coats and trousers—he was a careless fellow, was G.I., but he had evidently prepared himself for a stay of some length in a tropical latitude. Trelawny heaved a deep sigh and handled the shirts almost reverently.

"You were right, Leslie—this was the right cabin for us!" he said. "We must get these things over dry, anyway. I wonder if I could get the whole trunk on my shoulder?"

"You'd better change first, somewhere on the ship," said the girl a trifle scornfully. "You are wet enough!"

"So are you!" he retorted. "There are lots of things you can wear too, can't you? Look at this cloth!"

But the girl sprang up in a strange fit of perversity. "Oh, I dare say!" she said, pulling herself round the cabin to the empty bunk by aid of anything that would aid her to keep her feet. "I'll look when you get it to the cave. I expect I can manage—"

She reached over the little bed to a narrow shelf above it which had apparently held books, for one volume still lay there, though the rest—as she afterwards discovered—had been thrown about the floor as the ship rolled in her distress. It was a book of poetry, and the girl's hands trembled greedily as she opened it, more than the man's had done in touching the clothes. There, on the fly-leaf, was the owner's name—Gideon Ivermay—and on the title-page "Poems and Ballads, Vol. II., Algernon Charles Swinburne."

Needless to say, Swinburne had never dawned on Leslie's Methodist horizon. She glanced at a few lines a little further on, closed the worn volume and slipped it under her arm with a furtive air. Trelawny had closed the trunk again, and strapped it. He also appeared to be searching for something, and spoke rather hurriedly when she turned on him.

"What have you got there?"

"Only a book. What are you looking for—tools?" "N-no. The rest of the fellow's things. He packed what he didn't want to use in this trunk. He must have had a portmanteau or something—"

"Probably took it with him, then."

"I hope not!" Trelawny looked unaccountably disappointed, for there were clothes enough in the trunk. "What's the book?" he said.

"Oh, nothing." It was her turn to be guilty now. "But his name is in it—Gideon Ivermay. Hadn't we better go and look for tools?"

"Yes—but that was a good thought of yours to look in his books—even a name seems some sort of a link!" said Trelawny a little wistfully. "Gideon Ivermay!"

We may find some memoranda of his somewhere, about the voyage. He was sure to keep a diary if he was a bookish man. Go on first and give me room to get out the trunk."

Leslie did as requested, still hugging her treasure under her arm, and so aware that Trelawny would condemn its unpractical value that she did not notice though he did not join her immediately. When he did he had an air of renewed satisfaction, and something had been added to the contents of the trunk.

It would be difficult enough to hoist the latter over the ship's side, anyway, but Trelawny thought that they might manage it together in spite of the discomfort of their wet clothes and the great heat. It was now about three o'clock to judge by the sun, and at four they must start for the cave; so leaving the trunk on deck they went to explore the rest of the ship, and to gather whatever was of immediate value or use to them.

The *Golden Gate* had carried a cargo of copra, and was presumably taking it to America, to judge by the make of her stores and the flavour of nationality in all they unearthed. On this first occasion of boarding her Trelawny forgot to look for her name-plate, but he found it afterwards on the mainmast—"Golden Gate, Jeddow, San Francisco"—and that settled the question. The hold had been partially filled with water from the damage to the hull, but the copra was not of much value to the castaways, and they regretted it the less in that the galley, being amidships, had been spared, and the men's oilskins in the fo'c'sle were equally untouched. There were, as Trelawny had hoped, plenty of tools, though they were a good deal rusted, and of some of these he made a bundle, entrusting them to Leslie. The clothes found in the captain's cabin they stored safely in Gideon Ivermay's, but did not attempt to carry with them, and all further investigations Trelawny felt compelled to leave until another day. He had, anyhow, both clothes and tools, and having lightened the trunk of all the curios except the Indian shawl and the native cloth, he felt more assured of being able to

carry it porter fashion on his shoulders. It was not very large or very heavy, but the difficulty lay in lowering it over the ship's side and not dropping it in the water, for though the tide had run so far out that there was now only some fifty yards to wade to dry land, the sea flowed deeper round the base of the rocks, and even to get a footing was perilous. He went over the starboard side of the *Golden Gate* as he had boarded her, having first fastened a short length of rope round the trunk, and taken a turn round the bollard. He dropped the trunk overboard before he followed it himself, showing Leslie how to brace her feet against the side of the ship and use the leverage of the rope to lower her burden once he was in the water. She proved quite strong enough for the task, but it was no easy matter to hoist the trunk on to his own shoulders and loosen the rope, hampered as he was by insecure foothold, nor could he help her to clamber over the gunwale. Her months of forced activity over bush and rough ground, however, had made her a nimble associate, and once on the rocks by his side it was by her suggestion that he abandoned the effort to unfasten the rope, and simply coiled the end round and round his waist. Her own bundle being slung over her shoulders, and lighter far than his, her hands were free and able to assist him; but nevertheless it was a relief to both of them when they had cleared the beach and entered the mangrove swamp again, despite the heavy ground.

"We must hurry," said Trelawny, with an anxious glance at the sun. "We don't want to be stranded in the bush and have to camp out."

"I do hate this mud!" said the girl distastefully, picking her way from one rope-like root to another to avoid the black slime. "Oh, do look at those crabs!"

The ground was alive with them, red, blue, and yellow, such strange colours and such strange shapes that the swamp seemed the more eerie for the presence. Trelawny would have liked to have taken some home to see if they were edible, but it was impossible to carry them, and they pushed on, able to take a

more direct route than in the morning, when it had been necessary to skirt the swamp. The light was really better too, for the afternoon sun penetrated between the great trunks of the trees as his vertical rays had not been able to do through their thick crowns.

" You had far better walk in one of these little streams ; the bed is much firmer than the mud," said Trelawny in expostulation, as his companion sank up to her knees in a warm, dark patch. He himself was splashing on doggedly, though the heat of the swamp and the weight of the box made his skin stream with perspiration. Leslie looked down at her muddied legs and relapsed into vexed silence until they had cleared the swamp ; but, indeed, there was not much to choose between her appearance and Trelawny's. Both were unusually conscious of looking at a disadvantage in the other's eyes, and toiled on with the double object of rest and refreshment when they reached the cave. It was hardly better in the bush, save that the ground was firmer, but once they had climbed the cliff to the beacon a freshening wind from the sea cooled their faces and braced them for their last half-mile.

Trelawny halted at the top of the ascent, and looked back at the curve of shore from which they had come, but though sunset was flooding the sea and lighting up the western bay, all sign of the *Golden Gate* was completely hidden from them by the guardian cliff.

" She might have lain there for years and we never known if we had not thought to explore that coast ! " he muttered. It seemed an appalling loss now that he had actually some of the schooner's stores and stuffs in his possession, with more to follow.

Leslie had hardly paused. When he looked round for her he found that she had run on ahead, and was tending the fire which they had banked up before they set out on their expedition. It had smouldered through the night, and it was smouldering still ; but the feeble spark needed much coaxing to revive it.

" Let it alone," said Trelawny, lowering the trunk from his shoulders with a sigh of relief. " Don't trouble

for to-night. We can do with plantain, and eat the bread-fruit uncooked. All I want is a bath with *soap*, and one of these blessed clean shirts!"

"We can do with the bread-fruit better if it's cooked!" retorted the girl dryly. "And those shirts will be damp, packed away for you don't know how long!" Her unspoken jealousy of his civilization betrayed itself in her voice. "You had better wait and dry them in the sun to-morrow. There is no need to dress up to-night!"

But Trelawny's satisfaction was proof against satire. He went down to the rock pools, humming, and the sound floated up to the girl as she cooked the supper, denying herself the relief of a bath until that should be done.

"Take a pair of sparkling eyes—
Hidden ever and anon
In a merciful eclipse—
Do not heed their mild surprise—
Having passed the Rubicon,
Take a pair of rosy lips."

Leslie Mackelt raised her head with the old sullen resentment back on her face, and listened to the pretty notes floating up over the jutting rocks behind which lay Trelawny's bathing-place. He was far out of sight, but the song carried faintly—faintly :

"Take my counsel, happy man,
Act upon it if you can—
If you can!"

The sullenness faded from the girl's face, and her lips curved upwards again. She did not smile, but she looked as if she could rejoice that others should ; and that is the first lesson of charity.

CHAPTER X

“Pleasure with dry lips, and pain that walks by night—
All the sting and all the stain of long delight;
These were things she knew not of, that knew not of her,
When she played at half a love with half a lover.”

A. C. SWINBURNE.

TRELAWNY wished many times in the days that followed that he had been a Naval man, or, as he said, in the Engineers—any branch of the Services, indeed, wherein men are taught to use their skill and their hands together. He was a fair carpenter, and now that he had tools could turn his knowledge to account ; but it had been acquired when a boy, because he liked it, and since he entered the Army he had had little or no practice, while of electricity and engineering he knew practically nothing, and so could not make use of many of the forces which he vainly felt ought to be at his command with the discovery of the ship and her treasures of minerals and chemicals. His profession had taught him how to groom a horse, and to sign “returns” at which he hardly looked ; but unfortunately these accomplishments were not valuable on a desert island. Even Leslie Mackelt had been handier with her fingers.

They made a second excursion to the *Golden Gate* next day, timing their visit by the tides, and were thus able to cross the swamp and wade out to the ship direct, returning while the water was still low. On this occasion Trelawny drove off the sea-birds, and ruthlessly disturbed their nests to get at the for’ard hatch, and lower himself into the hold. It took some time and labour for his unaccustomed hands to remove the tarpaulin and the grating, but once in the hold he

discovered the reason why the schooner had been abandoned at sea, as she must have been, instead of those on board her clinging to the safety she afforded until she actually struck. All the damage to her hull had obviously been done when she was driven on the rocks, and had her officers and crew remained on board they would have been comparatively safe and able to get ashore when the storm abated. But there was no sign of their ever having done so, or of their having been rescued afterwards by another vessel, for they would surely have returned to the wreck for more of their property, and the whole affair had puzzled Trelawny extremely. Once in the hold, and among the copra, however, he understood. There were evidences of a fire having started in the for'ard hatch, and though it had not spread very far, those in command of the ship had probably considered it hopeless to attempt to fight the flames and manage the vessel in the teeth of the storm at the same time. She must have been left to drift, smoking, but as soon as she struck upon the rocks the water rushing into the hold had extinguished the fire, and left her merely with a damaged cargo. As to the copra, Trelawny did not much care, though he took the precaution to put the grating back and cover it with the tarpaulin to protect the hold. It was unlikely that they would ever be driven to such desperate straits as to try and subsist upon copra, with the natural resources of the Island, and he had no means of extracting the oil, which would have been useful. They left it where it was for the present, and set about securing and transporting such things as were valuable to them. The tools and clothes they could carry and store at the back of the cave, but for the more bulky articles, such as chests and lockers, which he hoped to get round to the western coast by degrees, Trelawny came to the conclusion that he must put up some sort of a shelter to make him independent of the tides and the getting them ashore when he proposed moving them. The caves were too stable, and therefore valuable in times of storm, to be abandoned; otherwise he would have

felt inclined to start his house-keeping above the little bay where lay the *Golden Gate*. As it was he made a rough bamboo hut near that shore for the storage of such articles as he wanted to bring away from the ship and could not transport all at once ; and later on he planned to build a more solid log cabin on the rising land above the western beach.

It was upon the second journey to the ship that they discovered such provisions as were not injured by the water or the climate, and packed them carefully for conveyance ashore. They were stored aft, under a small hatch before the wheel, and Trelawny descended gingerly amongst them, with a ship's lantern. He found that the lime-juice cask, to his chagrin, had become hopelessly musty, and such things as sugar and flour had been rendered practically unusable by the cockroaches. But the tinned things—the “bully-beef” that sailors love, and the butter and biscuits, had withstood their onslaught, and were veritable treasures. On coming on a quantity of jam, indeed, Trelawny raised such a howl of triumph as brought Leslie's anxious face to the open hatch, peering in on him.

“What *is* the matter ? What have you found ?” she called down to him. “Shall I try to come and help you ?”

“Don't you dare to, as you value your life, or I might murder you for its possession !” He thrust his head and shoulders up through the opening, and showed a heated, sunburnt face, grinning under the shade of the plaited hat. “I've found biscuits and butter (have you ever eaten tinned butter ? it's vile!) and jam—jam—jam ! Leslie, we'll have some tarts. Can you make pastry ?”

“Not with musty flour !”

“Then we must do with the biscuits. My sainted aunt ! but there are riches down there for two starving cannibals.” He broke into an old comic song that had certainly never assaulted Leslie's guarded ears before, in a fine baritone :

“ Some mulligatawny soup—
A mackerel and a sole,
A Banbury, a Bath bun—
And a twopenny sausage roll.
A little drop of sherry—
A little drop of cham—
Some roly-poly pudding
And some jam ! jam ! jam ! ”

“ What nonsense ! ” said the girl half crossly, trying not to smile at his dancing eyes. “ You seem to have gone mad down there. Do go on with your investigations, or we shall never have finished.” She added half shyly, “ I didn’t know you could sing—like that ! ”

“ I used to be the darling of my Mess ! Oh, I’m a bright boy at a sing-song.” His tone of mock conceit made her uncertain whether to laugh or frown. Trellawny’s chaff belonged to no known category of intercourse in Leslie Mackelt’s experience.

“ You had better go back to your jam—you may find more ! ” she remarked dryly, and he ducked down again, to report later that he had found a small quantity of spirits, both tea and coffee, tinned milk, and the officer’s sea-chests. His investigation of the latter made him independent of the spoilt clothes in the captain’s cabin ; but what was a serious loss was his discovery there of the real ship’s log, hardly more legible than the one he had found on deck.

“ I can make out a word that ought to be San Francisco,” he said to Leslie, as they peered over the blotched and cockled pages on the hot deck. “ This must be the entry on leaving harbour ; what I want to get at is a date.”

“ I don’t believe we shall ever find out how long she has been here,” said Leslie despondently. “ It might be years and years to judge by the way that things have rotted and rusted.”

“ You must allow for the climate. In a tropical country things will wear out, or be eaten by insects, in a quarter of the time they would take in the north. I don’t believe she has been here a year.”

"Why?"

"Because there must be a hurricane, or stormy season, and she might have been swept off the rock again, or broken up completely."

"In that case we'd better make all the haste we can and get everything we want out of her. I've found some knives and forks—"

"The deuce you have!" Trelawny looked as pleased as though it were a gold mine in the everyday world. "I was wondering what had become of their cutlery. Where were they?"

"In that pantry place in the middle of the ship—"

"My *dear* child!" he burst out laughing—a hearty, natural laugh that disturbed the wheeling gulls and mingled oddly with their sad cries. "Do try and call it the galley, and say 'midships'!" he said. "You are the veriest little landlubber!"

She flushed hotly, as she always did when teased; but the beautiful colour was partly due to something in his tones nowadays—something possessive, and almost caressing, as he might have spoken endearingly to a child.

"Well, it doesn't matter!" she said hastily. "I found them—down on the floor, the deck I mean, under all these broken dishes and cups."

"I wish the crockery had been left whole!" said Trelawny ruefully. "The metal things are mostly all right, except for rust; but we can't afford to lose any. Well, I must try to do some tinkering."

"I can boil the fish in the saucepan, anyway," said Leslie, with satisfaction in her tones. The racks and fittings of the galley had stood, and the pots and pans, though rusty, were still intact, and even in their places as they had been left. The exiles had felt the monotony of fish and bread-fruit constantly baked or roast, ^{end} welcomed the thought of a utensil that would hold water. "What a pity none of the live stock survived!" the girl added, with a little laugh. "Except, of course, our phantom hen!"

"Yes, and she's no good to us. Gallivanting on the

north end of the Island, and coquetting with snakes as likely as not!"

There were evidences on the schooner that fowls at least had been carried, as Trelawny had supposed, but they had either all gone overboard, or had struggled ashore and fallen victims to the snakes and rats. The medicine chest that stood in the captain's cabin was ruined by the salt water, and Trelawny threw the broken bottles and crystallized drugs overboard in disgust, and a prudent fear that did he attempt to use them he would do harm rather than good. He was too ignorant of chemicals to say whether the corrosive action of the salt, and the venomous effects of the climate, might not have had a poisonous effect, and decided not to allow either Leslie or himself to touch them. And he only kept such stimulants as they found on board for medical purposes, and proposed taking a solemn oath that neither of them should touch the dangerous spirits unless in dire necessity.

"We must keep the small quantity that I have found in case of snake-bites or fever," he said gravely, while the girl stared at him with her big eyes as if she hardly understood him. "Otherwise I would almost rather throw it overboard with the drugs. Look here, Leslie, give me your word you'll never touch the stuff without my knowledge, and I'll do the same to you!"

"But I never do drink spirits!" said the girl, a trifle indignantly. "I think they are far worse than medicines."

"I know you don't." Trelawny closed his lips oddly, and looked away over the blue ripples of the bay. "But we haven't got to the end of our endurance yet—we don't either of us know to what straits we may be driven. I know it sounds as if the temptation were ten thousand times as likely to be mine as yours—and I am willing to pledge you my sacred word of honour for that very reason. But—we can't judge ourselves out here, at the end of everything and the beginning of nothing, as we would in the everyday world. Do you remember the Solitude-Madness?"

She turned rather white, and her eyes were frightened as she looked up at him, even at the memory.

"Well, were you immune any more than I?" he asked gently. "If we had found spirits then—stimulants, drugs, anything that would have helped us out of our terror—should we either have resisted? And it would have been ten times worse afterwards—" He seemed almost as if he were speaking to himself rather than to her, seeing some horrible prophetic vision of what might be. "Come! let's shake hands and swear never to drink unless to avert death. We will trust each other's honour to save us where everything else might fail."

She put her hand into his, and so they swore faith. Trelawny was a little consoled for the loss of the ship's medicine chest by the discovery of a smaller case in Gideon Ivermay's cabin, though it held only a few simple remedies—quinine and carbonate of potash were in the largest quantities—but all such as might prove useful, and appeared unharmed. There was also a pair of medical scissors—sharp, delicate things with rounded tops, that he promptly *dedicated* to another use.

"Leslie," he said, with a certain amount of diffidence, when they were examining them, "I wonder if you could cut my hair for me!"

"Why do you want it cut?" asked the girl, staring with all her brown eyes at his half-sheepish face. There was a faint distrust in her tones, born of that grudge against civilization.

"Well, a fellow doesn't want to go about with half a yard of hair hanging down his back! It makes me so beastly hot. Do cut it for me, there's a dear! I forebore to burn it off—as you said you shouldn't come near me."

"I certainly shouldn't! And I think it's very silly to want to cut it—I'm trying to grow mine, and I'm not any hotter than I was before. If you cut yours it will only grow thicker and longer than before."

"Then you can cut it again—or I can. Of course, if you don't like doing it for me, I must do it myself."

He turned away, as if huffed, but between annoyance and laughter she called him back.

"Here! sit on this—" she pointed to the bollard, which was beyond her vocabulary—"and give me those scissors. I'll do it—but you'll probably look worse than before."

"Keep it as even as you can, and crop it close!" said Trelawny anxiously, as he threw the straw head-gear he wore on the deck and felt the bright, cold steel clip, clip, clip, against his lengthened hair. Leslie worked steadily over his shapely head with compressed lips. She looked at the thick brown ends that fell beneath her manipulation of the scissors, and at the smooth, shorn poll that began to show again, and something hard and strange seemed to grow in her throat. She had often glanced askance at that shorn head when it was turned away from her on the *Aristo*. Now she had found it ready to follow her, in its raggedness, it was like tempting fate to alter it to smartness and superiority again. Nevertheless, having undertaken her task, she did it to the utmost of her ability, for that was in her nature. And if she were not a very skilful barber, she made a very creditable job of her first essay at hair-cutting.

"Samson and Delilah!" said Trelawny gaily. "You have shorn me of my strength. Leslie. By Jove! but I am glad to feel clean again though!" He passed his hand over his shorn head with a sigh of ease. "Those beastly ends tickling my ears and getting down my neck made me feel like a poet johnny."

"Wait a minute," said Leslie hastily, as he attempted to rise from his precarious seat, "I just want to clip it close round your temples——"

"Have you left me enough to part it on the right side?" he asked anxiously.

"Yes—yes—don't fuss!—but I know you always looked mouse-coloured at the temples because you liked it cut so close——"

"How on earth did you know that?"

"Oh, anyone could know that, when you came up

from the barber's shop on the *Aristo!*" snapped the girl, turning away abruptly. "You look hideous!" she added over her shoulder, and went down the deck to Gideon Ivermay's cabin in a stealthy hunt for more books. Trelawny followed, more slowly, wondering with some resentment if what she said were in any way true. Her parting shaft was in no wise balanced by the coolness to his head, for if he had not improved in his lady's eyes he had indeed lost his ugly thatch in vain. He waded into the sour salt water in the captain's cabin, and, reaching over the weed-grown berth, managed to detach the little looking-glass which he had not been able to carry back with him the day before. It responded to his polishing by showing him his newly-shorn head, which was really quite respectable in itself, but, taken in conjunction with his still unshaven face, appeared to him ludicrous.

"That beard must come off, to-night if possible," said Trelawny firmly, and thought with satisfaction of Gideon Ivermay's safety razor, reposing in the safest of all the cupboard holes in the cave, by the side of the old knife. "She won't think me so hideous when I'm more like my old self—even in that fellow Ivermay's clothes. I hope they won't be too short in the sleeves!—one feels a fool with bare wrists—"

And in the meantime Leslie was standing in Gideon Ivermay's cabin, oblivious to her surroundings, an open volume of Browning in her hand.

" Little girl with the poor coarse hand
 I turned from to a cold, clay cast—
 I have my lesson, understand
 The worth of flesh and blood at last!
 Nothing but beauty in a Hand?
 Because he could not change the hue,
 Mend the lines and make them true
 To this which met his soul's demand—
 Would Da Vincé turn from you? . . .

" This peasant hand that spins the wool
 And bakes the bread, why lives it on,
 Poor and coarse, with beauty gone,—
 What use survives the beauty? Fool!

" Go, little girl with the poor coarse hand !
I have my lesson, shall understand."

And a few pages further on :

" For then, then what would it matter to me
That I was the harsh, ill-favoured one ? "

She shut the book guiltily, conscious that she had been spending uncounted time over the dear poems, as Trelawny's warning call came across the deck.

" Hulloa, Leslie ? Where are you ? We must be getting back—have you got everything you can carry ? "

" Yes," she called back, hastily thrusting the book into the rough bundle she had made with a knotted blanket, whose contents included the knives and forks, a chipped mug, two plates miraculously whole, some shapeless cakes of soap, a rough " housewife " belonging to one of the crew, brushes and combs and other toilet necessaries that had become luxuries since their sojourn on the Island, as well as the books. Trelawny for his share had the heavier iron pots and pans, the medicine case, as much bedding as he could carry, and the looking-glass. This latter he had swathed in the bedding, and he was as uneasily conscious of its presence as Leslie was of the books. Their secret burdens made them unusually obliging to each other on the difficulties of landing, and guiltily considerate of the tiresome journey that lay between them and the cave they called " Home " by tacit consent.

" Are you sure you can carry that stuff all the way ? " said Trelawny, as they emerged from the muddy tracks of the swamp and plunged into the bush. " If you like we'll leave it under a tree and mark the spot, and I'll come to-morrow and get it home."

" Oh, no ! " said the girl hastily. " I like to do my share. And besides, yours is *much* heavier : it's all shifted on your left shoulder, too. Hadn't we better repack it for you ? "

" Not necessary—better keep straight on now," said Trelawny, as emphatic as she had been. " It's no

weight after G.I.'s trunk, either. That was a bit of a pull!"

"Yes, I'm so sorry!"

"Oh, I didn't regret it. The things are all beyond price to us."

He did not add that he had spent part of the morning investigating the contents, while Leslie was considering the best place and use for the more obvious articles of clothing, and the tools they had brought the day before; or that at the bottom of the trunk he had come on Gideon Ivermay's dress suit, a little the worse for wear and very much the worse for packing. But it proved the status of the passenger as one who had at some time appeared in broadcloth, however much he might have thrust it aside as useless in the Southern Pacific. It meant something else to Trelawny's mind, too, a half-shamed project of which he would not acknowledge the reason in his own mind—but the cock pheasant knows the same instinct when he sports his brightest plumage in the spring to approve himself in feminine eyes.

Leslie was tired when they reached the cave, and dropped her burden with a sigh of relief. But she warned Trelawny not to touch it, as she had rolled it up herself and knew where everything was. "You might break the plates or the mug if you didn't know," she said, rather vaguely. "I'll undo it presently. Let's make up the fire now, while we can, and then I want to go and have a bath before supper. It was almost too dark for me last night."

Trelawny was in no hurry to interfere with her treasures; he had his own to harbour safely, and if possible unseen, and for this reason he seconded her efforts to make the fire burn up, and then good-naturedly offered to cook the supper while she had her dip. When he bathed he went down to the rock pools and the shelving shore, but by common consent they had apportioned a further creek on the other side of the headland for the girl's sole use. It was so shut in by jutting rocks as to be almost a bathing-pool at low water, and Trelawny had become gradually reassured that sharks did not frequent this side of the Island, whatever danger from

them might lurk on the north coast. He called a caution after her, however.

"Are you sure the tide is not too high? Well, don't stay too late then, and lose your way in the dark."

"All right," she called back, and he watched her agile figure spring up the northern headland and disappear in the level light, for the sun was nearing his setting. Then he set to his hoped-for task with fingers that almost trembled with excitement—afraid lest the glass should be broken—afraid lest the edge of the razor should be too blunt after all! But the fates were kind, and the means to the desired end were at least ready to his hand—

Perhaps no man ever shaved under odder circumstances, after a three month's growth of beard. With the little square of looking-glass propped up on a shelf of rock Trelawny stood under the naked sky in the sunset and clipped away the longer hair with the sharp medical scissors. Then he solemnly began to shave, and if the process was painful he was willing to suffer for his personal appearance like any professional beauty. When his face once more looked at him out of the looking-glass with some resemblance to the man he had known, he drew a long breath and coloured like a boy.

"I wonder what *she* will say?" he said, wishing that the sunburn of recent exposure had not drawn such a very emphatic line where the hair had protected his lower jaw. It would not be so noticeable in the dark, or by the light of the fire, as it would in to-morrow's daylight, anyway, and the general effect was creditable. "A first impression is a great thing!" said Trelawny and hurried over his cooking to allow himself time for his own ablutions and change of attire.

Leslie had not returned, even by the time he had metamorphosed himself, and with a new anxiety he placed the supper so that it should keep hot in the ashes, and went to seek her. He expected to meet her coming down the slope, but she was not there, and fearing the descending dusk for her he walked on. Her bathing-pool was not five minutes' walk from the cave,

up over the headland and down a steep pathway he had clumsily made for her special use. He had reached this pathway, and was hesitating over the strain to Gideon Ivermay's shoes—which were too precious to be risked on the rocks—when something made him catch his breath and stand still.

The glow of the sunset was still in the western sky, though the light was fast dying, and by its reflection he saw the dark blue surface of the pool and a figure that seemed as beautiful as Aphrodite's rising from it. ~~P~~ure white she looked in the twilight, though such an olive-skinned girl, and her unflecked limbs came up dripping from the water as she leisurely drew herself on to the rocks and stood a minute with upraised arms in the perfect joy of perfect health, and existence. For her health was perfect in this lovely, desolate spot, and her body had ripened and developed with it until she seemed almost a goddess in her innocence of nakedness. The man looked for a moment, drawing his breath as if stunned. Then he turned and crept away, out of her sight, and felt his way back to the glowing fire near the cave with a new wonder and awe in his eyes.

When Leslie came leisurely into the circle of light a few minutes later he was sitting in his usual place, the chair-like ledge of rock in which he could lean back at his ease. She must have been almost at his heels, and have only had time to rub herself down with some of the bed-linen they had brought from the wreck, and then re-dressed, before she started to return. She was wearing the old knicker-bockers that she had patched and mended as best she might, and the sun-bleached muslin shirt ; and though she had reduced her thick dark hair to some sort of order by aid of a brush and comb, it still hung barely to her shoulders, and did not much alter her boyish appearance. There was only the memory of the goddess in the pool, and the softer lines of her figure, to betray her growing womanhood.

“ I had such a glorious dip—the water was quite cool, and it was so nice to have soap and a kind of towel ! ” she began, throwing the wet heap of linen down at the

mouth of the cave. Then her eyes fell on Trelawny, and she stopped short.

For if there were no very notable alteration in her appearance as yet, there was in his. His cropped hair was correctly parted and brushed, and his face newly shaved save for the small military moustache—so much she saw at once. But the metamorphosed head she might have withstood, had it not been for his clothes. The firelight was lenient to Gideon Ivermay's old dress suit, and clean linen, and Trelawny had discarded the waistcoat for his own, the one whole garment that he had brought safe from the *Aristo*, and the one that at least fitted him. The incongruity of his appearance under his present circumstances had not struck him until he met the girl's stare of blank surprise, and saw it change to a stormy anger. Then he began to feel himself ridiculous, and laughed a little nervously.

"I took advantage of your bath to dress up," he said hurriedly. Somehow the impression of the goddess in the pool remained to awe him, though his material eyes saw only the slight ragged figure that he had called "Tommy." "I wanted to celebrate our first civilized meal—with plates—and knives and forks—" He broke off helplessly wondering how he had made her angry. If she had laughed he could have understood it. But there was suppressed passion in the intense quiet with which she turned to the cave.

"I will get the plates," was all she said, and began to undo the blanket bundle with swift, steady fingers. When she came back to the fire she brought not only the plates and the mug, but a book tucked under her arm. He wondered why.

"Come, Leslie, do sit down and let's make a regular orgy of it!" he urged almost pleadingly. "I wish I had caught some fish, but I—it was too late. Why didn't you dress up too? If we have to play at savages we may as well amuse ourselves! There were heaps of things in that trunk—"

"I hadn't time," said the girl, with the same extreme quiet. "Besides, the appearance of a savage

suits me well enough. I hope you feel more comfortable!"

Trelawny felt anything but comfortable. He had failed in his clumsy attempt to approve himself to her, without quite knowing why. She sat down at a little distance again, after helping herself to bread-fruit, and ostentatiously placing the one mug beside him, drinking water herself out of the old calabash she always used. He felt further off than ever, instead of nearer her woman's fancy.

"I feel rather a fool," he said shortly. "I thought I should like to see how dress clothes went with a desert island—I find it's a mistake. I shall go back to flannels to-morrow—"

"You don't look at all a fool!" said Leslie politely. "You look just like your old self, Major Trelawny."

The sound of his name with its formal prefix for the first time from her lips made him look at her sharply. It flashed across him now that she had never called him Miles, though their enforced intimacy had made it a natural thing to him to say Leslie, once he remembered her sex. She was calmly eating her supper, nor did she speak to him again until she had had her share of bread-fruit and plaintain. Then she spoke carelessly, over her shoulder, without another glance at him.

"Will you stir the fire, please, and make a blaze? I want to read."

Trelawny did as she asked, mechanically, and watched her in moody silence while she opened the volume and apparently lost herself in its pages. What new mood was this? What had he done so fatally wrong? He could not tell that she never read a line to understand it, but was recalling a former confidence of his while his ankle was still too wrenched to allow him to walk.

"Edna Carrington! . . . 'She looks at her best in her riding habit' . . . and *he* looks at his best—as he is now! That is how she thinks of him—that is how he may look in the future—with her—if there is any other future for us but this!—It is Edna Carrington he is remembering when he goes back to his old self as he

has to-night—and I am oceans away from him, though we are pitchforked together here. Oh, I hate him and his conventional clothes ! I hate everybody and everything. . . .” The angry sobs rose in her throat and she choked them back. “ He has thrust his own world between us. It is just as it was on board the *Aristo*——”

Trelawny turned to the remnants of the meal, and began practically taking off his coat and turning back his shirt cuffs. She sprang up and was upon him like a tiger.

“ I’ll wash up—you can’t in these clothes ! ” she said fiercely.

He flung down the coat on to his rock seat, as pettish as she.

“ Nonsense ! I am going to wash up as usual. Go on with your book.”

“ You shan’t ! ” she panted, wrenching the plate out of his hand. “ Do you think that dress clothes *grow* on this Island ? You’ll never get any more even to play at civilization in ! ”

“ Take care ! ” he warned, catching the plate as her trembling hands nearly let it fall. “ Do *you* think that plates grow on this Island either ? You’ll never get any more, even to play at smashing them in a temper ! ”

She flung back her head, her brown eyes wide with passion, and looked up at him as he stood over her, still a violent contrast to her own wild figure even in his shirt sleeves. Her breath came hot and fast between her parted lips, and she looked like a beautiful fury, for the life and colour in her more than made amends for her deficiencies of dress.

“ Leslie, what *is* the matter ? ” he said gravely.

“ I hate you—I hate it all ! ” burst out the girl, throwing out her hands towards him to express his whole changed appearance. “ We were equals before—you’ve altered it—you’ve put me in my place again. Oh, I know it is my place ! I know how it was on the ship, when I never could reach you, never should have spoken to you and known you, save for this——” Her splendid, free gestures took in the whole of the night-shrouded bush

and the glimmering shore. "Do you know what I felt when I first came back to life and found you looking at me?" she hurried on, breathlessly. "I was *glad*—glad that it had all happened, because I was alone with you here, and you would *have* to know me!"

He remembered that look in her eyes on her return to consciousness, a strange look that he could not decipher. He did not understand it all now, but he saw one thing clearly—her jealousy of his past life and the old associations that came with his fatal "dressing-up." His face flushed a little in the firelight, as if with a reflection of the passion in hers. Then he stooped with an awkward movement, and set the contested plate carefully on one side; but when he turned to the girl with freed hands she had slipped down at his feet and was sobbing bitterly.

"Oh, don't look at me—don't notice what I say!" she sobbed bitterly. "If you knew what my life has been! There was no colour or beauty in it—you've had all these things—you don't know! And it was like sharing them to know you, and to hear you talk—"

Her voice trailed off into tears from her own self-pity, and there was shame, too, for what she had said, or made him believe. She buried her face in her hands, under the thick veil of her falling hair, and the dancing firelight played over the abased little figure, pathetic in its rags and loneliness and confession of false ideals and aspirations.

Trelawny sat down in the rocky seat, and drew her towards him with a strength that was not to be denied. But she did not resist; her body rather inclined towards him, until she knelt between his knees, with her face still hidden, and her figure quivering with her own feelings. She could not see his eyes, but she could hear his voice, though it was little more than a whisper.

"Leslie—dear little girl!—nothing could ever part us now—don't you know that? Can't you feel that I shouldn't let you go—even if we *are* rescued? Come here—and be comforted—"

He lifted her into his arms, her head pressed down

against his shoulder, and pulled her hands away. The fire leapt and laughed wickedly, and showed the two faces nearer each other. Then the flame mercifully died down and left them the dark for their first kiss. But it was no comfort to Leslie Mackelt. Every drop of blood in her body seemed drawn up to her lips, and then to surge back again into her heart, making her nerves throb with pain. Her experience of being kissed hitherto had been limited to her aunt's cold peck upon her forehead, and her brother's matter-of-fact touch upon her cheek, and even the latter had ceased since she had been considered grown-up. If it was not seemly that relations of opposite sexes should kiss each other after they became men and women, there was no shred of excuse in her creed and upbringing for the long pressure of Miles Trelawny's lips upon her own, the sick thrill that made her long to run away and yet unable to move. It was not pleasure—it was all pain. And yet for a minute she lay there, wishing that she could die now and never have to repent.

It was the cry of a bat that broke the spell, and made the girl wrench herself out of the man's clasp—a little plaintive cry, so like a bird's as the unseen body whirled by in the darkness. Leslie stood up giddily, with a new weakness in all her limbs, and pushed Trelawny away from her as she might have done the visible presence of evil.

"Don't speak to me—don't follow me—let me go now, for God's sake!" she said incoherently, and he let her go, perhaps because his faculties were as little under control as hers, perhaps because it was such a little way that she could flee from him in the green prison of the Island. She ran back to the cave, stumbling over familiar stones that she had perfectly avoided an hour ago, and hid herself in the darkness of her own inner recess, her face buried in her arms, her whole body trembling and cowering into the soft bed of dried grass. She knew no more than his kiss had taught her—an inarticulate language, awakening shamed senses, but giving no definite warning. All her abasement was

for having outraged her own woman's modesty, according to the creed she had been taught wherein a man's touch alone was unpermissible to a woman, without further reason ; and the added wrong to the bodiless, unknown Edna Carrington, whose existence was merely a name out here in the Southern Seas, but who held a claim to this man that not all the casting-away on earth could break, to Leslie Mackelt's sense of honour. He was bound to this woman on the other side of the globe, and though they might never meet again the link held fast without mutual consent to break it. Leslie could not sleep for many restless hours that night. She tossed and turned, and her body felt hot and strange, as if a fever had attacked her. It was a horrible thing that she had done, and she was suffering her just deserts. Morality, and not Nature, bore the blame in Leslie's creed.

But Trelawny went down to the shore and paced up and down on the smooth sand, for he was a man and he knew and understood. The shoes hurt his feet after his three months' freedom, and he kicked them aside and went softly in his borrowed socks, but the print of his feet bore testimony to a restlessness as great as Leslie's.

"I won't do her any harm," he reiterated to himself again and again, as if to reassure his own honour. "Poor little girl! . . . She is more at my mercy than she knows—with her ignorance—and all Nature to tempt us. . . . Poor little girl! . . . I should be a brute—and there is just the chance of rescue. . . . I must cling to that. If we once lose hope we may as well go straight to the devil. . . . No, I won't! I won't! . . . She doesn't even understand herself—much less me. . . . I'm only a man, but I wouldn't harm a hair of her head. . . . It's going to be the very deuce though! . . ."

And the silence and the sweetness and the longing had grown to be tangible, insistent things.

CHAPTER XI

“ Virtue, how frail it is !
Friendship, too rare ;
Love, how it sells poor bliss
For proud despair.”

SHELLEY.

TRELAWNY began the log-hut the next morning. He was up earlier than usual, though sunrise generally found him astir, and by the time that the Island was glittering with new light he was hard at work measuring a level piece of land and making the ground-plan of his house. The fallen coco-nut that had saved his life when he was flung on shore was still lying there, save that its crest had been used for firing, and he decided to make the two portals of the doorway out of it as a kind of poetical justice ; but he was loath, otherwise, to cut down any of the kindly palms, and decided to have his walls and roofing of bamboo, and the corner posts of a kind of logwood that he vaguely recognized as well suited to building purposes, being unproductive of food. It was a “one-man show,” to use his own phraseology, and he was obliged to limit his exertions to the lighter kind of timber ; but he had, anyhow, a couple of axes whose presence on board the *Golden Gate* he considered amongst the best of his discoveries, besides a formidable saw.

As the sun rose the light caught the crests of the coco-nuts and the mass of bush that luxuriated almost down to the white sands, and struck out notes of purer green and gold in the foliage. The warm cliffs turned pink and buff-coloured under the light, and sky and sea were one vast molten turquoise. Then a bird called to his mate from the opening of the Gorge, and a pair of lizards darted across the ground where Trelawny stood,

puffing out the exquisite orange bag beneath their throats, and flinging up wise heads to the morning. The scent of the wild orange and the logwood flowers came down from the higher ground and drifted out to sea. It was all rather like the breaking of a morning in Eden. Small wonder if Trelawny felt as Adam, and looked for Eve to people his universe.

She came with the lengthening rays a half-shamed figure emerging from the cave, with a newly fashioned skirt hanging to her knee and transforming her from boy to girl. Somehow his heart leapt at the concession, after the failure of overnight's dress clothes, and something of the new feeling in him was in his eyes as he looked at her. But he did not go to meet her, or speak until she was close to him. He stood on the foundations of the new house he meant to build—where the threshold of the door would be—and awaited her, almost tongue-tied, struggling for some expression that should reassure her and yet confirm last night's betrayal. It seemed to him almost like a consecration of a new life between them when she joined him by the entrance to the dwelling-place he had raised already in his mind—their house, a mutual habitation for the enforced life together that began to seem desirable despite its appalling exile.

"Leslie!" he said at last, and there was a little catch in his voice. "Won't you say good morning to me?"

She stood beside him, almost stiffly, and there was something strained and tense in her figure, betraying that all the muscles were tightened. Her hands were twisted together in a close grip, as if the moral effort to speak were too great without some physical expression, and her eyes looked not at him but at the wilderness of beauty beyond—the splendid mass of green that was fresh and dewy in the sunrise, and the warm blue sky just filling with lazy little clouds in some upper current of air that did not disturb the serenity of the morning. Nature is innocent enough, even when she allures with her beauty and rejoices in the instinct of generation.

"I want to say——" began the girl harshly, and he saw her moisten her lips as a martyr might at the stake. "I know I was very wrong last night. I am sorry—I forgot"—her voice faltered, and then she forced it on—"I forgot that other girl—Edna——"

Of all things that she could have urged against their new relations this was the least expected. He had looked for her to draw back at first, frightened by the new experience, deterred by some absurd scruple of her narrow creed. But that she should simply place his honour as a barrier between them, took him completely by surprise. The tie seemed to him so far-off and impossible that it was almost like a legend. Even the hope of rescue had never been immediately connected in his mind with his marriage and a future with Edna Carrington; he had merely craved for it as an escape for this living death of solitude. Once again he was almost abashed by the extreme single-mindedness of Leslie Mackelt's outlook on life. Her creed might indeed be narrow, but it kept the plain ideals of honour, chivalry, honesty, truth, and the obligation to do good, constantly before her. That she marred the achieving of her object, that her ideal of doing good was circumscribed by bigotry and error, could not obscure the pure principle of the girl's earnestness. For a minute he found nothing to say.

"I did not understand myself—I said things I ought to have kept back," said Leslie confusedly in his silence. "I don't know what you must think of me! I am very, very sorry. We won't ever say anything like that again—we won't ever refer to it!"

"I don't think we said very much!" said Trelawny at last, dryly.

"No, but we—but you—but I——" she stammered, and her distressed face crimsoned at the disturbing memory. It softened the resentment in him at once. He could see her struggling—poor little girl!—against a thing he understood so well!

"Is it because I kissed you?" he said softly.

"Yes!" She spoke under her breath.

"And you didn't like it?" For the life of him he could not resist that irony, knowing how much she had liked it. But she did not answer, and his heart smote him.

"Leslie, dear," he said gently, "I won't do anything you don't like—I won't ask you for anything you don't want to give. But do think! Here we are stranded, out of the world, away from its conventionalities and standards, forced into a kind of unofficial honeymoon—how are we to keep to the restrictions that would come naturally if we were back in civilization? We can't run away from danger, remember—we must be together day after day and month after month—perhaps all of life that is left us. You may have the best intentions, but you will find it impossible not to long for the very thing you have forbidden. We had much better let it come naturally, and accept it, and—and be as happy as we can under the circumstances. I never thought I should be happy in this damned Island!" said poor Trelawny, looking round at the beautiful background of his prison; "but, by Jove! I can, if you will only let me!"

He had unconsciously moved closer to her, and was half uncertainly touching the thick dark hair that she had tied back from her face. "No one could blame us!" he whispered, as his caressing fingers reached the small flat ear and the warm neck. "And as to that other allegiance—how *can* we consider it here? She may think I am dead, and be married herself, for all I shall ever know!"

The girl flung up her head with a kind of shocked horror. "She couldn't—so soon!" she gasped, and he did not see the compliment implied. That any woman could console herself for Miles Trelawny seemed impossible enough to Leslie; certainly Edna could not do so for years and years! "And besides—it doesn't make any difference—you are bound," she said with a touch of obstinate despair. "If we were rescued now, and went back to the ordinary world, wouldn't you return to her?"

He hesitated. The speculation seemed so useless, and yet so tiresome. "I don't know what I should do—I can't imagine being rescued, I've begun to lose hope," he said almost roughly, perhaps forgetting that he had told himself that that was the shortest way to the devil. "We can only go on from day to day and endure, and try not to think, or we shall go mad. And if—if there is a chance of something more than content, of being reconciled to it, why shouldn't we take it? We have only each other in all the world."

He made a sudden movement and held out his arms, the light in his eyes making them warm and blue.

"I won't lose heart—I won't believe we shall die here!" said the girl desperately. "I am sure there is the rest of your life for you, somehow, to live out as you planned it. We must cling to that—we must never forget it. And we must live as if it were always the next thing that was going to happen, so that we shall have nothing to regret when it comes."

A certain sullenness settled down on the man's face. He had meant as well as she the night before, but her very resistance roused the opposite strain in him—it was like arguing with his own conscience. He felt the uselessness of it all too, from a certain practical matter-of-fact trait in him that put common sense above ideals. He meant to do her no harm—he had told himself so over and over again—and he felt that the bogey of honour she raised between them was a strained sense under the circumstances, and that they were both slightly ridiculous and melodramatic. Nevertheless he must let her have her way and find out her error, all the more so because he was half angry at the rejection of his advances.

"Very well—we can take a mutual oath to treat each other as dummies, if you like," he said shortly. "Have it your own way! I give you my word I will never speak to you as I did last night, or touch you until you ask me!"

"That will be never," said the girl with an echo of despair in her voice. Had she been older or less limited

in experience she would have doubted her own resolve, as the worst of all temptations ; but for all her study of her Bible she had not learnt the grim truth of that warning to take heed lest we fall.

Trelawny went back to his work in silence, and the girl, with a heavy heart, prepared their breakfast. Being a woman, it was some solace to her to apportion the one mug as well as a plate to Trelawny—a concession that he hardly noticed.

They had discovered both tea and coffee on the *Golden Gate* in small canisters that would be easy to transport, because a large canister once opened is liable to turn musty or spoil on board a sailing ship in those latitudes ; but the exiles were in no great haste to bring such luxuries away from the ship, for there was the desperate feeling hanging over their consumption that each inroad would hopelessly reduce the store, and it was a task for Tantalus to decide how it should be eeked out before the arrival of that phantom ship that never arrived to rescue them. Had the coffee berries been in the raw state Trelawny would have made a bid for fortune and planted them, trusting to the wonderful fertility of the soil ; but the coffee was ground, and all hope of future gain from the ship's stores was destroyed by modern advantages in the way of carrying semi- or wholly prepared food. The one improvement in their present meal was that by means of the saucepan Leslie was able to boil some sweet potatoes that Trelawny had brought from the interior of the Island, instead of roasting them. Even such poor differences in food made a welcome change.

"I shall go over to the ship this afternoon," he said during breakfast. "But there is no occasion for you to come." It was his only remark throughout the meal.

Leslie hesitated. Yesterday, perhaps only an hour ago, she would have insisted on accompanying him, and have frankly stated that she would rather share any chance of danger than imagine him running a risk alone. Now there was the personal reason for keeping apart from him, and she was afraid to protest lest he

was leaving her behind with a purpose. She was beginning to acknowledge the snare of propinquity, but she saw with despair whether her own decision anent their relations was leading her. If he chose to undertake any excursion and to leave her to await his return she would have to do so, though with breaking heart and a soul tortured with anxiety. This was the first time in her life that she had really experienced the woman's portion, to wait and endure, and the first taste of it was intolerable.

Trelawny spent the earlier working hours in chopping timber for his new house, until the sun became too hot to do anything but rest. Later, he set out for the bay and the wreck, familiarity with the place having enabled him to shorten his journey considerably. He only wanted to reach her at low tide, and to return before he was cut off and had to swim for it ; but the intervening hours were the longest that Leslie Mackelt ever spent. She knew that he was leaving her intentionally, and it was her business to help rather than hinder him ; but when he was gone she sat down on the lonely, lovely shore and stared with tortured eyes at the mocking beauty of the bay, the sea-birds wheeling over the creaming reef, and the empty blue sky. Was this kind of thing to go on indefinitely ? Was she to forfeit even the dear companionship that was beyond all value to her, for the sake of an unknown woman and a shred of honour ? And if the present strain were ended by some remote chance of rescue, must she go back into the living world with the estrangement still unhealed, and be shut out of his life again, completely, by circumstances ? It seemed an unfair burden that he had bound on her shoulders, and yet she could not blame him—he was only doing what she had decreed. The woman gives sentence of death to her own heart ; but it is the man who elects her as executioner, and puts the knife into her hand.

As the days passed the wall of constraint between them seemed to increase with each silent hour ! The man had the best of it, because his practical common sense taught him to turn his attention to work and the

distraction it gave him, as he had done before. The girl moped and brooded when not forced by necessity to her share of the struggle for existence, and read her books in the lovely, maddening solitude. Her study of Swinburne and Browning and Fitzgerald did not help her much ; but she had never had their work in her possession before, and glutted herself with poetry, applying such as she liked best to her own particular case and Trelawny's. In particular she read and re-read "The Rubáiyát," because it was the one poem from which she had heard Trelawny quote, and his knowledge of its wonderful quatrains filled her with an increased respect for his mentality that it is probable he hardly deserved. For Leslie did not know that the majority of men may be divided into three sections—those who do not read at all, and those who read either *Omar Khayyám* or *Marcus Aurelius*. The *Khayyáms* are perhaps a little more numerous than the *Aurelians*, but it is nearly certain that a small edition of one or the other will share honours with technical treatises and the daily paper.

When they met at meals Trelawny talked of his plans and the improvements the discovery of the wreck had given him for their mutual comfort ; and she felt she hated any amelioration of a lot that had begun to wear a rose-coloured aspect before she sternly turned her back upon it herself, but most of all she hated the little timber structure over which Trelawny laboured so faithfully. It absorbed him from radiant morning to rainbow eve, and she could have found it in her heart to tear it down and despoil it as she had once tried to do the beacon. She was almost jealous of the senseless timbers and the solid supports, and looked forward resentfully to the final thatching of the roof with palm and wild cane. She knew by instinct that one reason for Trelawny's steady work was that he meant to sleep there if she would not do so, that he wanted to remove himself as far as possible from her by night even as he did by going on excursions by day. While they had their cave-rooms side by side there was no getting away from

the other's presence, for the silent hours of darkness at least. If she listened she could hear his even breathing through the night, and to know that he was there was a pain and pleasure both at once. In her girl's mind she did not assign any darker reason for his desire to be further off—the unknown torture of a man's yearning that he dared not dwell upon. Even Trelawny himself perhaps hardly acknowledged it. His reason for building a hut was—practical again!—the obvious one that the cave was good for storage, and they had now so many valuable possessions to store that he must find some outside shelter for himself. He did not believe that the sea washed right up to the back of the cave, except in exceptional storms or high tides; but if it showed signs of so doing he must enlarge his house, and remove the articles brought from the *Golden Gate* again. He ceremoniously offered the use of the new hut to Leslie as a woman, and she with equal curtess declined it. "I am quite comfortable in the inner cave on the dried grass," she said. "I hate log huts!" After that it was easy to shrug his shoulders and build for himself.

And the silence, and the sweetness, and the longing went on as before.

* * * * *

The mending of a saucepan had always seemed such a simple thing when undertaken by an old man with an apparatus like a walking coffee-stall and a wheel that whizzed. There was an old man in the village of which his father was squire, who had been a familiar figure in Trelawny's childhood. He had gone about crying "Knives to grind!" but people had brought him other things to renovate besides knives, and he seemed able to doctor pots and pans quite as well. In those days he had not seemed a particularly gifted old man to Miles, but sitting on the beach of a desert island, with a rusty broken saucepan between his knees, Major Trelawny came to think that the old knife-grinder had been endowed by the gods.

"Damn the thing! How did he fill up the cracks?" he said, looking ruefully at the injury in the saucepan's

side where the metal had worn thin and the rust had eaten it away. "He'd got some beastly sort of solder. How do you make solder? I know there's resin in it!"

He flung the saucepan from him with a sense of impotent rage, and the thing bowled over along the smooth sand and took refuge in a rock pool, where it bobbed up and down derisively. "It's no use *your* taking to the water!" said Trelawny, shaking his fist at it. "You're leaking now—you know you are. You'll sink in a minute."

He turned his back upon the saucepan as if abandoning it to its doom, and took up a plate of copper and a heavy hammer that he had brought from the *Golden Gate*. The metal was uninjured and burnished as if with the energy of half a dozen housemaids, for in those waters ships are copper-bottomed with intention. There is something in the chemical ingredients of the South Pacific which acts upon copper like a burnisher, but never corrodes as it does other metals, and if you strip the plates off a ship with great care you may get them clean away without injury—as Trelawny had found.

The *Golden Gate*, with her bows high in air, had exposed her copper plates to Trelawny's depredations, and he had brought one away with a vague idea of encasing the saucepan. Now he began to bend and coax the hard metal to some shape that should distantly resemble a cup, or any utensil that would hold water, and as he worked the interest of the task grew upon him and the natural instinct of man to bend the earth's products to his will—to overcome the solid resistance of mere substance. The copper yielded stubbornly, but the sides of the plate began to curve upwards without cracking, and then with the hammer Trelawny began to beat the bottom downwards, though what he really needed was a wooden pestle for the job.

It was a very elementary substitute for the saucepan, but he began to see that in time he might be able to turn the most unpromising materials to his service. The log cabin had seemed a hopeless problem at first, and he was bound to confess that the saucepan had

proved far more disheartening than any building of log cabins. He caught sight of it again, bobbing about in the rock pool as if laughing at him, and cursed it, feeling like a fool. Then his eyes lit on the copper plate which was really assuming the vague outline of a bowl, and he felt his self-esteem reinstated. For he had discovered a great principle of nature, that if you cannot mend a thing it is better to let it quite alone and start fresh to create a substitute.

He had just arrived at this discovery, and was becoming absorbed in his new creation, when he was aware of a light step that he knew, and that made him tingle the while he preserved an utter indifference outwardly. It was not often that she willingly approached him now, and he had thought that she was gathering grass and fern to dry in the sun and renew the bedding in the cave. This was woman's work, and he had felt justified in allowing her to use it as an excuse for getting away in her turn, since he was near at hand this afternoon.

The soft tread of bare feet stopped at his shoulder, and she spoke in the quiet, dragging tone that he was beginning to know. It always sounded very tired, and made his heart throb, half with resentment, half with pity—pity for them both.

"I want to speak to you," she said.

"Yes?" he responded carelessly, still intent on the copper plate. "I wish you would suggest some way of making this into a saucepan! I can't mend that old thing down there in the water, and I'm trying to make a new one. But it has no handle—"

"I think you have not rounded it enough. Try dinting the sides as well as the bottom," she said, and he felt her stoop to inspect his work, and shivered slightly. "Will you look here?" she added after a minute.

Then he turned his head reluctantly, and saw that she was carrying one of their few precious pencils (all the ink on board the *Golden Gate* had dried beyond hope of liquefying again), and had also torn a leaf out of one of her books, which she was offering to him.

"Will you see if this is legal?" she said. "Can I make it legal?"

He took the sheet in some surprise, and read what was written:

"If I should die on this island, I wish to give and bequeath one-half of my property to my brothers, and the other half to Miles Trelawny, Major in the Carbines."

"What does this mean?" he asked gently.

"I thought," she began, and then faltered, "I thought if by any chance I died here and you were rescued—" Then she broke off and flushed uncomfortably. "Don't you see?" she said.

"No, I don't," he answered bluntly. "You are no more likely to die than I am, so long as we can find food and shelter. If one dies, the other will probably die."

"You said it was a great deal of money—that I was heiress to a huge fortune," she interrupted illogically. "Why shouldn't you have it? You would enjoy it much more than I!"

"But, my dear child," he retorted, "I am just as much a castaway as you are. Why should I be rescued more than you?"

She did not answer for a minute, but stood looking down at the sand which she fretted with her bare foot.

"You might—" she said at last. "Men are stronger than women, anyway. If anything happened to kill one of us—"

"Something happened on board the *Aristo*," he reminded her. "But it didn't kill either of us—not even you!"

"It would have done, if you had not fed and nursed me."

"Possibly."

"I owe my present existence to you," she said, obviously catching at a new argument. "Please let me make what return I can. I *want* to give you the money. Can't I make it legal?"

He shook his head, almost smiling.

"How could you? There are no witnesses—only

the beneficiary under the will, even if it were a will. And your family might object under the score of undue influence, even if they did not suggest that I had murdered you to obtain the money!" He tried to speak lightly.

"They would not—my brothers are so conscientious that if they were sure it was my meaning and my last request, they would carry it out somehow!" she said eagerly. "Do please show me how I can make it sure!"

Trelawny put down the embryo saucepan and rose to his feet, towering over her in rather a threatening attitude, though he did not intend it.

"Look here," he said firmly, "in the first place you are not going to die—it is morbid to talk of it. In the second, it is absurd to talk of leaving our property to each other, when as far as we can see no one will ever know that we were thrown up here alive. And in the third, I could not accept such a bequest, though all the lawyers in the world were sitting round us to draw up your will!"

She turned away, looking like a disappointed child. There were so evidently tears in her eyes that he caught her by the shoulder and held her back.

"Leslie," he said rather breathlessly, "what is the matter? Why do you think you are going to die?"

"I don't think so," she said sullenly. "Worse luck!"

"Then why do you talk such nonsense? You look much better than when you came to the Island—I have told you so often."

She brushed her hand furtively across her eyes, and tried to shake herself free.

"Let me go!" she said, catching her breath. "I am sorry you won't let me do what I want—it wouldn't hurt you!"

"But why do you want it?"

"Because I—" She looked up wildly for an instant, and the brown eyes, drowned in tears, said, "Because I love you!" Only her lips kept truce with the task she had set herself. They were hopelessly silent.

For a minute the two looked despairingly at each other, the man begging for leave to put the pretty, tragic avowal into words, the girl refusing herself the impulse to put her arms round his neck and let him feel and see the meaning of her foolish, offered fortune. Then his hand dropped from her shoulder. She had not taken off her embargo and said that he might speak.

"Because I am a fool!" said Leslie Mackelt bitterly, and turned back to the cave.

Trelawny sat down to the forgotten saucepan, and pondered how a once useful article—such as a heart, for instance!—can be replaced or repaired when hopelessly injured. The prospect, either for that organ or the saucepan, did not look hopeful. He whistled drearily :

"Oh, maid, what have you done?
You've broken my heart, and I had but one!"

wondering if Leslie knew the song, and could fit the words.

Then he said "Damn!" and it didn't relieve him at all.

The girl climbed into the inner cave, lay down on the sweet dried grass, and cried.

This time it was the woman who had the advantage.

CHAPTER XII

“Indeed, indeed, Repentance oft before
I swore—but was I sober when I swore?
And then and then came Spring, and Rose-in-hand
My threadbare Penitence a-pieces tore.”

OMAR KHAYYÁM.

THERE are various ways of building a log-hut, and some of them are quite scientific ; but these latter presuppose facilities equal to those of the Swiss Family Robinson, or a railway line that leads to civilization. Trelawny's position was rather that of the Israelites when ordered to make bricks without straw, for though he had plenty of bamboo to build with he was ambitious of something more solid than the ordinary bamboo hut, something that should resist the assaults even of hurricanes. For the straight wood of the uprights he could find nothing more adaptable than the species of logwood that flourished exceedingly all over the Island, but it was painfully branchy. For days it seemed to him that he did nothing but lop branches, and when the stripped trunks began at last to look like the solid supports he had in his mind he felt as Sisyphus might have felt if he had ever got his stone over the top of the hill. The larger trees growing in the vicinity of the cave were beyond his strength to haul or handle, as he was practically alone ; but the logwood, though more solid than bamboo, was a small tree, and those he picked out light enough for his purpose.

His building plan was the simplest on record, and is the first that suggests itself to the mind of any boy who becomes a squatter during half-holidays in the back garden. Miles Trelawny was beginning to think of his own capacity indeed as nearly limited to the schoolboy's. Everything that he knew of use to him had

been learned in his school days, from climbing trees to using his sling, and of the fine fellow he had rather thought himself since he joined his regiment there remained nothing save a craving to shave that had made him ridiculous.

His hut was the hut of triangular corners—that is, three supports well sunk into the ground just wide enough to allow the logs to rest between them at right angles to each other. But because he wanted something stronger than the usual bamboo hut he doubled his walls and made his uprights of the logwood, some seven foot high at the corners of the hut, and nine or ten for the three running through the centre of his room on which to support the cross battens of the roof. These latter uprights he scooped out at the top in the shape of a half circle to make a resting-place for his bamboos, but he could not afford to use the length or sized rafters that he coveted on account of the weight; and even as it was he was obliged to press Leslie into the service, to her untigned disgust.

"I can't see any necessity for a hut at all," she said sulkily, when he proposed that she should lend what slight strength she had to get the bamboos into position. "The caves did well enough."

"The caves might be flooded in a high tide," Trellawny answered steadily. "And we have not room for storage."

"Then let's leave the things on the *Golden Gate*. They are safe enough there."

"Nonsense, Leslie!" The man was beginning to feel the irritant of the woman's lack of reason. "You know we agreed that another storm might drift her out to sea again."

The girl's delicate brows contracted ominously. He would not look at the little mutinous face and the pouting lips. Perhaps he feared his resolution breaking down more than she. "Well, anyhow, if you had to build your stupid old house, I wish you'd do it alone! It's not a woman's work!" she said with childish rudeness. Sometimes it relieved her to gibe at him.

He went rather white, but he kept his temper and his determination. "I am very sorry, but you must do your share," he said. "It is not a question of man and woman, but of two human beings fighting for existence. I won't overtax your strength, but you will come and learn to haul on a rope to-morrow."

He spoke with authority, and the significance of the "man and woman" phrase silenced her. It was her own decree, and she could not refuse to play the game. On the morrow she followed him out to the banks of the stream where the bamboos flourished, and together they hauled them back to the level land above the cave. The girl worked silently, with the noose of a rope slipped over her shoulders, pulling with all her small weight against the solid load. It made Trelawny sick to see her pant and strain, and when they slackened the rope the mark of it that he knew had left its impression on her soft flesh through the thin shirt. But she must do it—she must do it. He had a kind of savage satisfaction in not sparing her as a woman, and forcing her to help to build the hut where one of them should sleep at night, beyond the torture of nearness.

Trelawny dug the holes for his uprights by himself, and sweated as Adam did when he first turned the earth; but he demanded the girl's assistance again to help swing the logwood supports into position, and to get them solidly driven into the holes. This was the hardest part of his job as far as manual labour was concerned, for the bamboo walls presented no great difficulty. The doorposts and lintel he contrived from the fallen palm as he had promised himself that he would; but when it came to the door itself he was puzzled for hinges, unless he took them off the cabin doors of the *Golden Gate*. It was Leslie who came to the rescue, unwillingly enough.

"You needn't take all that trouble!" she said, unable to resist a stab at his laborious methods. "The hinges would be awfully difficult to fix, anyway. I've seen a better door in the Bush."

"Well?" he said curtly. He did not greatly believe

in her experiences, and his tone suggested incredulity.

"You get a broken bottle," she said slowly, with aggravating deliberation. "And you sink the lower half in the earth, upside down—are you listening?"

"Yes."

"Then you make a point to your doorpost and fit the pointed end into your broken bottle—let it rest in it. The upper end you simply fit into a hole in the lintel, and the door swings on its own axis—see?"

Trelawny was staring at her by this time, in open amazement. Ridiculous as her description was he could see how the thing was done. "By Jove!" was all he said. But he made his door bushman fashion, and it swung in its broken bottle with great simplicity. Fortunately there were plenty of broken bottles on the *Golden Gate*.

After that experience he was more respectful to the girl's knowledge.

"Leslie," he said, when the walls of the hut were finished, "what do they floor the huts with in Australia?"

"Ant-heap," said the girl laconically. "And you throw the ends from the tea-cups on it—I don't quite know why. Perhaps it helps to cement it. Anyhow, it's as hard as concrete." Then the corners of her mouth quivered with girlish amusement at a reminiscence. "When Donald and I had been living in the Bush for some time we got used to their ways," she volunteered. "But when we got back to a town and we were asked out to have tea with a minister's wife, Donald forgot where he was, and I saw him toss the end of his tea out on to the carpet! It was so funny!"

The breach was healed for the minute by their mutual laughter. There is no greater friend to peace than merriment without bitterness.

"There is no ant-heap here," said Trelawny ruefully. "So I shall have to be content with a wood floor."

But he got his boards well-seasoned from the schooner, and began to consider the problem of his roof. This was a serious matter, for he had to plan for the weight

of his cross battens and rafters, and though Leslie could lend a hand again it was no light task for a single man to get the gentle slope that he wanted, for he intended to thatch with palm and dried grass, and to weight it all with big stones to resist the heavy winds. Such roofing he had seen often enough in tropical countries ; it was only a question of making the framework strong enough. The principal weight rested on the three centre posts whose forked upper ends supported the bamboo ridge-pole, but he found them of the greatest use also to lean a ship's ladder against that he might work at his rafters from below as well as above. Man is a tool-using animal, as Trelawny found. With the implements taken from the carpenter's shop he wrought and fashioned and fitted, until that part of the structure was as firm as the solid walls.

"It ought to stand a gale !" he said to Leslie, on the day that the thatch was finished, standing back to look at it. The girl looked at him instead, with covert jealousy—a strong bronzed man, in a flannel shirt, and trousers rolled up to the knee, bare-legged and bare-armed. His face was immaculately shaven nowadays, and his shorn hair was only just beginning to lie smoothly to his head.

"Yes—if you haven't built it exactly in the way of the high winds !" she said dryly.

"Oh, the rising land shelters it. I expect the winds are mostly from the north-west here."

"No, they aren't—they are from the south-east," said the girl bluntly. "I can tell from the trees. Haven't you noticed the bark ?"

"What has that to do with it ?"

"They tell that way in the Bush," said the girl, as if a little ashamed of her knowledge. "An old bushman told me. The side the wind blows is always mossy. It's a way trees have of defending themselves."

"Great Scott ! you are always surprising me," said Trelawny frankly. "Do you know any more wood-craft ?"

"Nothing of any use here," said Leslie laconically.

"When are you going to move into your house?"

"It isn't decorated yet. I think I'll get some of those coloured crabs out of the swamp, and stick them on the walls! You'll have to boil them for me!" He laughed a little mischievously. It was seldom now that he laughed, but he was evidently elated with his achievement.

"I certainly won't," said Leslie at once. "I hate killing things!"

"Perhaps I'll use some of those spare sails as a ceiling-cloth—like they do the Indian bungalows." (She suspected this novel idea was to show her that she had not all the knowledge. He also had picked up practical hints in distant corners of the world!) "I'm glad I floored the hut with boards after all. It will be safer for snakes."

She shivered a little, and her voice was forlorn as she said, "And you are going to sleep there!"

"Yes!" he answered curtly. "I shall move my bed in, any way. Later on I mean to remove one of those bunks in the cabins and set it up here—I can fasten it against the wall somehow, and dream I'm in a ship!" he added bitterly. "Are you sure you won't take possession of the hut yourself?"

"No!—I like to be where I am. I was always more comfortable than you, you know, in that inner cave." She tried to be gracious, and to speak cheerfully.

Trelawny was really very pleased with his hut, but no sooner had he accomplished so much than he wished to make improvements. He had ingeniously contrived a small space in one wall which he called a window, by cutting some of his bamboos shorter and binding them together, one over the other, to prevent their slipping out of place, and he made a rough shutter to shelter the open space in time of bad weather. Then he began to plan another room, and to extend the framework of the roof, while the girl looked on with miserable, baffled eyes. He seemed so content for the moment and so occupied, in his stalwart manhood; and she was struggling with emotions and instincts that she did not even understand,

with nothing but her usual work to distract her, and the heady effect of an orgy of poetry such as had never come her way before. She did not read very wisely, for at this time Browning was almost too robust and hopeful for her, and even Omar counselled enjoyment of the moment, whereas Leslie was hugging her woes. Her favourite amongst the poem's was Swinburne's "Wasted Vigil," which began to come and go in her memory as did the great Ode. Perhaps her Scotch ancestry lent her some sad gift of premonition. Even in the present the words were easily applicable to Trelawny :

" Last year, a brief while since, an age ago,
A whole year past with bud and bloom and snow,—
O moon that wast in heaven, what friends we were!
Couldst thou not watch with me ? "

And the silence, and the sweetness, and the longing went on as before.

On the day that Trelawny finished his second room he proposed to take up his residence in the hut. He would have done so before, but for the difficulty of transferring and fixing his bunk, which he had had to bring from the schooner in sections, and then to adapt it to his new quarters. The further room was to be used for storage, and was even more carefully constructed than the first. Besides, he was learning, and experience was making him quicker and handier at his tasks. March was now far spent, and the winds were rougher, though there was still little rain ; but Trelawny was anxious, and began to shift the things out of the cave and into his storehouse as soon as ever he could. He and Leslie carried most of the stuff between them, but the girl would never come further than the door. Since he had furnished the hut she had never set foot in it, but if he noticed her prejudice he made no comment.

It was on the 23rd of March—they had reason to remember that date—that he took personal possession of the hut, and carried the bedding from the *Golden Gate* into his new bedroom, where the ship's bunk now stood looking strangely trim and alien in its new

setting. Trelawny had floored his hut some two feet above the solid earth to keep it dry and safe from vermin, and had set up a small dressing-table and one of the sea-chests, besides the drawers below his bunk. Also, he had a couple of chairs, one of which, made after the familiar "hammock" pattern with his own hands, filled him with extreme pride in himself. It was so civilized a place after the cave, that he felt it incongruous to use it himself while the girl still kept her savage quarters. But a last appeal to her met with the same flat denial.

"No, I won't!" she said, to his offer of exchange. "Don't ask me any more unless you want me to be downright rude to you. You've been used to the luxuries of life, and I haven't. I'll make you some white curtains for your window if you like!" she added mockingly.

"I've roughed it on service as you have certainly never done!" he retorted hotly. "But I like the decencies of life, I admit—I will take a good deal of trouble to preserve them too, which it is obvious that you would not do! Why on earth," he added impatiently, seeing the mortified colour in her face, "do you egg me on to say ill-natured things? I used to be a good-natured fellow, but with you all the rancour of my nature seems to come to the top."

"Oh, no doubt it is my fault! I dare say you were a saint with the 'May Queen' and her sort—I am sorry that under no circumstances could I grow like them, however."

"Mrs. Gellert was no particular friend of mine, or 'her sort' as you call it, either. I thought her rather a vulgar woman, but she was at least pleasant and courteous."

"Which I am not!—Well, then, I am sorry I am not like Miss Carrington—perhaps I have hit your ideal now!"

"That is a subject we will not discuss, thank you!"

"I am sorry you will not give me a chance of improvement. If you told me her virtues often enough I might perhaps imitate them."

"I should say that was quite impossible!" he said dryly, and her stormy eyes flashed with rising passion.

"A man's idea of perfection is generally attained through ignorance of the woman who poses as model!" she said very quietly, so angry that she was unconsciously epigrammatic.

"I hate a bitter tongue!" he muttered.

Half unconsciously they had turned from the hut and walked across the rising land to the beacon. It was so imposing a pile that it hid the immediate vista of sea as they approached it, and as if by common consent they separated in silence and walked round it, one going to the right and one to the left, until they emerged on the other side, and stood at the cliff's edge, a yard or so distant from each other. Then, simultaneously, they saw the first sign of life they had yet seen on those laughing, desolate seas, beyond the reef.

It was a trail of smoke upon the horizon. But so unused had they grown to any sign of civilization that for a few minutes they stared, incredulous, as they had done at the wreck of the *Golden Gate*, while gradually—gradually—the faint witness of man's vicinity grew less and less, until it was only by straining their eyes across the bright sea that they were certain of it. It was passing away from them instead of coming nearer, tantalizing them with the possibility of rescue that might be the only one for the remainder of their existences. How long it had been visible, and whether it had been any nearer, or even within hail, they could not tell. While they had stood bickering outside the completed hut this thing might have been, and a ship come and gone. They neither of them spoke until Trelawny said quietly, "She is going west—south-west. She is outward bound."

Leslie did not answer. She stood still in the shadow of the great pile of wood that seemed a mockery since it had not been a flaming beacon, and her eyes were still on the horizon, for she did not dare to turn them to Trelawny. If she had done so she was afraid that he would read a piteous relief in her eyes, for she knew that

at this crisis she was glad that the ship had passed without rescuing them ! Whatever horrible fate might be the end of their sojourn on the Island, she did not want it to end like this, with such miserable relations between them. Come weal, or woe, there was at least the chance of snatching some sort of happiness while they remained together ; and though she was the one to push it from her she longed for it none the less. Her extreme youth made hope her natural element. "Something might happen to make it all right somehow !" her heart counselled vaguely, and the mirage of joy was always coming and going across her desert sands.

Being older in life and experience, Trelawny had no such illusions. He knew the situation could not alter mentally ; but he had begun to look for it to alter physically in the natural outcome of things. That was common sense. Give them time enough, he saw only one solution to the difficulty ; but the other possible factor in the case was their return to the boundaries of the social world, and the restrictions of something beside their own wills. If that happened he foresaw that the girl's resolution would obtain support from without. Of itself he did not believe that it would stand. Her tenacity had made him unconsciously sullen and irritable, and had had the effect of spoiling his own resolutions and spurring him to overcome hers. Had she been weaker the nobility in him might have triumphed to save her from herself ; for it is an attribute of such natures that whereas helplessness appeals to their chivalry, antagonism rouses them into the hunter pursuing the quarry. He felt that she was wasting time with her resistance, and he had his own passions to curb. The sudden appearance of the ship caused a revelation in his mind—it brought the end of his unfulfilled desires in view, and instead of the frenzy of despair and disappointment that he half expected, he found himself like Leslie, filled with a relief so secret that he would not acknowledge it to himself. *She was not to escape him this time. Her maddening attraction, and the fierce demand in his own veins, were not to be thwarted as they might have been.*

She was his, as surely as she stood in his sight, her grave little face turned to the sea!

"We must keep a better watch after this," she said at last in a steady voice. "Perhaps this is the time of year when trade brings ships nearest to us." And her heart throbbed with the terror of being the one to make the successful signal, and frustrate her own desire for reconciliation.

"Yes," he agreed. "Perhaps we ought to take watch and watch, and be within sight during the day. I doubt our being able to see a ship on moonless nights. The reef keeps them far out." He felt as he spoke that this was all that could be expected of him. He was salving his conscience the while he hoped for a respite. Rescue might come some day and welcome when he was sure of her. For the moment he was almost amazed at his own feeling.

Leslie seemed a little relieved at his composure, and the self-restraint he showed under this new ordeal of a lost opportunity. She respected him quite unduly when she saw him go back to his house-building, and proceed to store their possessions. It was she, in fact, who during the afternoon took up her position by the beacon and sat down to watch the horizon while she worked at a skirt for herself out of Gideon Ivermay's native cloth. Once a cloud in the sky made her sick and dizzy with hope and fear, and she sprang to her feet to run and call Trelawny before her will should fail her; but the cirrus took on a new form and betrayed its origin, and she sank down again to her task with trembling fingers. She had lit a small fire which she banked and kept smouldering with some dry fern and grass ready for tinder, to fire the beacon if necessary, and as the sun neared the horizon she dropped the work from her hands and crouching by the smoking heap she stared out with solemn eyes at the radiant sky.

Green and blue and golden—flame and crimson and rose—it stretched across the west, transfiguring the blue-black waves and the exquisite wreaths of foam on the reefs. The Island was on fire with it, and the

solitary figure of the girl, quivering with a suppressed passion she dared not unloose. She had seen the sunset so many times before, and been awed by its beauty ; yet to-night it seemed something more than a pageant of colour—it was ominous, flushed with the splendour of life, calling to her imperiously to hold out her hands for imperial gifts of life and love. A sob broke from her lips, and her hands twisted themselves together as if in agony. The squabble of the morning returned to her mind to worry her with a fear of having widened the breach and at the same time she longed to be comforted and petted and mastered even against her will. It was very lonely keeping vigil by the beacon for the ship she dreaded to see, while the glorious sun drenched all the rest of the world with the benediction of his passionate passing.

“ Couldst thou not watch with me one hour ? Behold,
The sunset skims the sea with feet of gold,
With sudden feet that graze the gradual sea ;
Couldst thou not watch with me ? ”

The quotation easily adapted itself.

Leslie threw herself down in the shadow, her hands gripping the earth, and pressed her soft body against the hard ground to cool her riotous blood. She was nothing but a little animal at the moment, and she knew it with shame and fear unspeakable.

When the sun was gone, and swift darkness followed hard upon his splendour, she dragged herself to her feet, and slunk along the beach to the cave, where earlier in the day she had banked another fire for supper. She was glad of the darkness, for she felt ashamed, and even while she cooked some fish and prepared the tinned provisions from the *Golden Gate*, she was careful not to allow the fire to blaze up and discover her face. She expected to hear sounds from the hut to tell of Trelawny's presence, though she did not mean to call him until she was ready ; but after listening once or twice the blank certainty fell on her that he was not there. When he had left the place she could not of course tell, the beacon

being too far off for her to catch any sound from the hut, but there was complete silence there now and a new terror fell on her that his composure had been assumed, and that he had gone away to brood or rave as when he was under Solitude-Madness.

She sprang up and ran as well as she could in the dusk up the northern slopes above the caves, where she had found him before. But he was not there, and she turned in the direction of the Gorge, calling softly. Still there was no answer, and it occurred to her that she must get one of the ship's lanterns, which they had trimmed and filled with oil for an emergency, and start out to look for him until she found him, however late the hour.

The night was moonless, and in her anxiety Leslie did not collect her thoughts to look where she was going. She found herself stumbling among the roots of trees, and stretched out her hands to feel the trunks, fancying that she must be on the outskirts of the Gorge where Trelawny felled his timber. The hot smell of the earth rose in her nostrils and gave her a new, keen sense of the strangeness of her surroundings, for it is a sensation peculiar to the tropics alone ; in no temperate climate does the sun bake the ground sufficiently during the day for the warm odour to rise after he has set. The girl noticed it subconsciously, but it made her tingle with excitement of something novel and alien to her upbringing,—a larger world, and savage instincts. She thought she must be walking in a circle, expecting every minute to find Trelawny lying on the strange-smelling earth at her feet, when she suddenly saw the glimmer of her own fire that she had left, and almost ran into the log-hut in the darkness. Skirting it quickly she made a rush towards the cave, meaning to fetch a lantern, but before she reached it she came to the fire, and sitting with his back towards her was Trelawny's quiet figure, his head leaning on his hand while he kept watch over the sweet potatoes and the tinned meat.

Accident is always the tinder that catches the spark from the flint of life. If things did not happen unexpectedly we should preserve our mental balance from

one end of existence to the other, keep to our groove, be able to foretell the assured result of our intentions. But Fate's policy is to take us unawares. The passion of the sunset hour had slackened Leslie's will, the anxiety about Trelawny had added to it to disturb her, and the sudden sight of him thrust her blindfold into the snare of her own unruly emotions. She took an uncertain step forward, and laid her hands on his shoulders.

"Miles!" she said, and the little broken whisper reached him out of the dusk.

But he would not accept the half capitulation.

"Well?" he said gently.

"I thought you had gone off alone—because of the ship—and I went to find you—I was so frightened!"

"For me?"

"Yes. Don't leave me alone!"

"I had only gone over to the south bay to get something from the *Golden Gate*."

Another pause. Her hands still rested on his shoulders. She drew nearer and they crept round his neck, linking themselves under his chin.

"Well?" he said.

"I want to be loved!" said the girl with a little sob. "I know it's wicked—but—please, kiss me and forgive me!"

He unclasped her hands and stood up deliberately. "Come along!" he said in an odd, choked voice, and she slipped up to him, her face resting on his hard shoulder, and curiously aware of some pulse that seemed beating against her like a hammer. That, and the relief from the aching and yearning of her whole body, were the only things she seemed to know. She was so tired out with elementary emotion that it was a rest to lie still in his arms and be kissed to satiety.

"Why did you spoil it by calling it wicked?" Trelawny said at last reproachfully. "I can't see anything but the beauty of it."

"Because of that other girl!"

"Oh!" he drew a long, thoughtful breath—"we'll

discuss that presently. I think I see a way out. Let's have supper first, and then you can sit on my knee (where you ought to have been long since !) and we'll talk it over." She was moving away from him shyly, towards the fire, when he caught her back. " You are sure you love me ? "

" Oh—I wish I didn't ! "

He gave her a little shake. " Nonsense ! " he said, and a new element of excitement or high spirits seemed to have got into his voice. " You don't wish anything of the sort. You've been dying to make me happy and be happy yourself for the past week—only your silly little pride got in the way ! Now we shall be all right. I'm going to give you some of this stew—is it stew ? Anyhow, it smells all right—and if you are very good we'll eat out of the same plate ! "

Leslie sat down in her usual place, between him and the fire with rather a dazed look on her small face. It seemed such a real and almost terrible thing to her to acknowledge loving him, and it was like a reaction to hear him speak so lightly, and to laugh. She sat in silence while he waited on her—up till now it had been her prerogative to apportion the meat in their system of sharing labour—and only shrank a little when he sat down on the ground beside her, for his actual presence troubled her senses. Naturally she could not eat, and it threatened to be only a pretence of a supper on her part, until he took her fork and deliberately began to feed her like a baby.

" Come ! " he said, more decisively. " I can't have you shirking like this. What's the matter ? "

She could not say. She only knew that the food choked her, and she was frightened of the past few minutes, but more of the present, and most of all of the future. All she contrived to say was : " Please don't be silly ! Go and sit in your own seat—I'll eat all I want—I'm rather thirsty ! "

He looked into her face for a moment with kindly, quizzical eyes that she did not meet. His own blood was leaping and racing fast enough to enable him to

guess something of the tumult in her veins—he, with a lifetime of experience and a man's control, matched to her girl's bewilderment at a totally new experience. It was not fair. She was taken unawares. He filled the china mug with clear, cold water that he had brought from the stream, and made her drink.

"Poor little girl! you might be some small, feverish wild animal, caught in a trap," he said half tenderly, half amused. "Are you so afraid of me? I shan't hurt you!"

"I am not afraid—of anything!" (She lied heroically.) "But I wish you would let me go away—just for a little while—to think."

"Not for a moment!" he said firmly. "I know what the result of that would be. A Methodist fit of conscience—tears—denials—all sorts of procrastination! No, we've got to talk this out. Had enough meat? Eat some fruit then."

She could swallow the ripe melon that he offered her, and it seemed to cool her parched throat and relieve the throbbing in her head. But she was glad when he declared supper over, and washed up their new utensils and stored them away, for he omitted none of their usual duties. Then he turned round on her and caught her by the shoulder, holding her before him.

"Look here, you are not going to play with me any more!" he said with sudden fierceness. "You thought, didn't you, that you could salve your conscience to-morrow for your weakness of to-night? You lost your head, and acknowledged that you loved me—but it was only to-night's weakness! To-morrow you would have gone back on the old tack."

A lightning glance into her own mind showed her that he was right. She would have done so if he had let her. She was honest, and she did not speak.

"Well, I'm not going to have it that way," said Trellawny, more quietly, but with an equal intensity. "We're man and woman, and it's to be yes or no between us. You were holding out on the score of my being bound to that other girl—Edna Carrington—weren't

you? On the chance that we should get back to all the old laws and ties of civilization some day?"

"Yes—"

"Well, I tell you now that I don't believe that we ever shall get back. I thought not to-day, when we missed our chance with that ship. I believe it will never happen again, in my inmost mind, and even if it did her position showed me that in all probability ships would be too far off to see us—the reefs keep them well outside. But I'll give you my oath that if we ever do get away I'll go straight to Edna and tell her the whole story. Will that satisfy you?"

"What will you tell her?"

"That I've been a fool, and fallen in love with a girl who is not half so suited to me as she is!" he said savagely, and the grip on her shoulder made her wince with pain and some strange exultation. "A girl who is all uncertain moods, and who puts her scruples above the very utmost that a man can offer her, and has a bitter little tongue and would rather hurt him than not—and yet—that I love her so that she is as my soul to me—and I can't let her go—I can't—I won't—"

The storm of words ended somehow in her inner consciousness for she was gripped against his chest, her head under his chin, her face pressed hard against his working throat. It seemed as if neither of them could be articulate for a moment, for there was nothing to hear but the man's harsh breath and the girl's choking little cry as she clung to him, feeling bruised mentally and physically.

"Now will you leave me?" whispered Trelawny incoherently to the warm night. "Now will you tell me that our duty is to go different ways? Do you know what would happen if I married another woman? I should come back to you some day, as surely as the summer comes to the earth, and no vows and no praying and no honour would prevent my taking you. You had better promise to marry me honestly rather than ruin another woman's home when it's too late to do anything but mischief."

She sighed a little, as if the resistance were tired out of her. "Did she—that other girl—care for you very, very much?" she said slowly, and her voice shook. "Do you think it is going to hurt her as much as it did me?"

"Bless your heart, no!" He spoke with a certainty that she distrusted in her inmost heart—for who could help being desolate without him? "She is a very sensible, practical young woman, and she'll be only too happy to release me under the circumstances. I can't fancy Edna caring about a fellow who wanted some one else!"

"I'm afraid I should!" said Leslie Mackelt in the darkness. "I should cling on to the least excuse to keep you—oh, I know I should! I should hate myself, and you would hate me—but I should do it."

It seemed to her the dregs of humiliation that she tasted in making the confession; but he saw it in quite another light.

"My darling!" he said. "Are you as fond of me as all that? Let's sit down, as I've said we would, and talk about ourselves now we've settled all the disagreeable part. Leslie, what broke down the barriers to-night?"

"I was so frightened!" she confessed, pressing closer in his arms. "I thought you had gone—that you were desperate—"

"Oh, no—I only went over to the *Golden Gate* to look for a flag. I want you to make a Union Jack out of the Stars and Stripes—there's a task for Hercules! Oh, I forgot—I found one of the mates' pipes and some tobacco. I do think I might have a smoke for once, just to celebrate this occasion! I haven't tasted tobacco for three months, and there's no use in hoarding everything."

Perhaps she was a little disappointed that the excitement of the situation was not enough for him without tobacco. She did not grasp the inevitability of the position to Trelawny, nor the more subtle reasons that made the pipe a safeguard to him. Even while he sat and smoked, the girl leaning against his shoulder, he was making new resolutions—desperate resolutions that would at least be put down on the credit side of his

account by the Recording Angel. For having overcome her resistance the chivalry in him was uppermost again—for the present at any rate. The arms that held her held her very gently, and he forebore to kiss her again until they finally said good-night.

“Now, Leslie, there is to be no going back to-morrow!” he warned her, standing at the mouth of the cave as at the threshold of her own sanctuary. “You are to meet me fair and square on the same footing as to-night.”

“I am not a turncoat, once I make up my mind,” said the girl a little proudly. “It was only—that I felt it wrong. But if you are sure—about Edna Carrington—”

“Supposing we never leave the Island?” he said rather suddenly. “Would you have us waste the whole of our lives, for the phantom of a woman in England who will probably marry somebody else?”

The troubled brown eyes fell before his. “I won’t think of that,” she said bravely. “There is the *chance* that we may get back, and while there is the chance we must consider the ties that bind us—in England.”

“Very well—I have given you my word that I will make it all right with Edna if we do get back. In the meantime—you must be a little kind to me!”

His voice was rather unsteady, and she vaguely wondered why. Then he kissed her good-night and left her with her pulses throbbing again, while he turned on his heel abruptly and went off to the log-hut. It seemed to him the outward and visible symbol of all his good resolutions, set just out of reach of the danger of her nearness. And yet, as he flung himself down on the little bunk, the cynical query would flit through his head as to whether he had built it with enough stability to withstand a great storm? Would the hurricane of wind—or of passion!—carry away the structure he had so carefully erected. Was man stronger and more cunning than Nature? He fell asleep without answering his own question.

CHAPTER XIII

“ There may be heaven ; there must be hell,
Meantime there is our earth here,—well ! ”

ROBERT BROWNING.

THE high winds that Trelawny was expecting began towards the end of March, and blew from the south-east as Leslie had foretold. There seemed something ominous in their approach, and he looked at the hut as if the strain on the timbers represented the strain on his own good resolution.

For a week things had gone well—very well indeed ; and the situation was as idyllic as Paradise before the entrance of the snake. It was a solitude *à deux*, staged with divine loveliness and a perfect climate for the development of all the emotions. Even quarrelling was only a piquant change from love-making, and whetted the appetite afresh for making-up. A less fiery and difficult nature than Leslie's might have satiated Trelawny in a very short time ; but it was her misfortune to vary the mental atmosphere sufficiently to keep up the attraction by her very uncertainty. It seemed as if the gusts of her own temper fanned the flame of the man's passion. He might hate her, but he did not grow bored, and this was the more extraordinary because she was really very young—younger than girls of her age in Major Trelawny's world—and utterly without experience to help her to hold her man in thrall.

One never knew where to have her, he thought savagely, when some mood of hers had made the whole Island seem in the grip of a miasmic wind, and he had stalked off by himself on a hunting expedition to leave her to get over it. One hour she would be full of humiliated sweetness, his chattel to do as he liked with, it

seemed, a little girl to pet and lecture and lord it over ; and within a minute something would happen to upset her, and she was the bitter-tongued little Methodist, denouncing his character and pursuits and whole existence with a narrowness that lost none of its point in recrimination. He did not see that this was the wavering reaction of her traditions and teaching, the last rush of the waves up the beach as the tide ebbed ; any more than he knew that when he had withdrawn the light of his countenance she suffered fits of despair at her own belligerence, and a wild remorse that she could so have jeopardized the best thing that life held—the very natural and very ordinary love he offered her.

Sometimes it seemed to the girl that her own crudeness and unkindness were killing the sentiment she had inspired, when he would not sit close to her in the happy, lazy rest hours, or take her in his arms, or hardly kiss her. Then she sat in the old attitude with her hands round her knees, drooping, and fit to cry for the touch and the tone she missed—for she had not quite grown up even yet, nor did she understand his self-restraint. But it was at such moments that the man's higher self was in the ascendant, and that he made pitiful resolutions afresh.

The evenings were his worst time, for then there was no work to intervene, and nothing but the seduction of the night to listen to above his own wild senses. After the evening meal was over it was their custom to sit on the warm sands and watch the moon come up across the hills, or the wilderness of stars over the sea, while Trellawny smoked a rare pipe or made love in broken whispers. He was the more afraid of these evenings of the two, for he knew the danger. But the girl was only to keep her fool's paradise a little while.

It had been a windy day, but the night of the crisis was calm and fair. There was no moon—she thanked God afterwards that there was no moon, and that she had not distinctly seen his face—but the night seemed very full of stars and fire-flies that danced even down to the water-line. Leslie had been moody that day, and had repented at even, her repentance taking the form of a specially

savoury dish composed as a peace-offering. She did not really like cooking, but she was woman enough to know that man is susceptible to the art of preparing food, and she had improved herself in it of late. Therefore the bully-beef was rubbed with papau to make it tender, and flavoured with certain herbs which they had tested as harmless, and the wild yam was cunningly prepared ; there was even a sweet contrived of grated coconut and the liquid wild honey, and toasted cheese for a "savoury," with biscuit freshly baked in the wood ashes ! It was a luxurious supper, and she offered it as a silent apology.

Trelawny felt sentimental after the repast, though bully-beef is not conducive to anything but dull repletion as a rule. He lay down on the warm, moonlit sands with his head pillow'd on the girl's lap, and quoted Omar :

" Here with a Loaf of Bread beneath the Bough,
A flask of Wine, a Book of Verse—and Thou
Beside me singing in the Wilderness,—
And Wilderness is Paradise enow ! "

Then he demanded "Sweet and Low" to realize the picture. Leslie could not sing, but her voice brought the sense of music into the words. She had a song in her speaking voice when repeating something that she loved that was better than many people's vocal efforts.

" Over the rolling waters go,
Come from the dying moon, and blow—
Blow him again to me ! "

There was the yearning for her lover in the words, though he lay actually beside her—an unconscious yearning that betrayed the never-satisfied human heart.

" I remember so well the first time that you repeated that to me," said Trelawny lazily. " You were sitting in the mouth of the cave, and you thought I was asleep."

" I was so uncomfortable," said the girl, struggling to express her mental attitude. " I thought you hated me—"

"I couldn't hate you—I might want to, but I should find that it was love turned upside-down after all!"

Pretty nonsense, murmured in the dearest voice on earth, through the warm depths of the tropic night! She put her little work-hardened hands under his chin and turned his face gently towards her, looking down at him with eyes that seemed darker under the darkness of her loosened hair.

"Your eyes are full of shadows!" he said.

She smiled a little and then sighed, running her fingers caressingly round his bare throat. Her hands carried messages from her heart that her brain never counselled, and, indeed, she was innocent of any knowledge of her own restless movements. She liked the liberty of touching him; it made him seem so much more her own, and she was always a little jealous of the years that lay behind in which other women had claimed him. She certainly did not realize that her very touch was a temptation, and that the man who lay so still with his head resting on her knees was wondering when his endurance would snap, or whether it would hold out until some intervention of direct Providence.

Trelawny had never before experienced the possibilities of a desert island as a situation for love-making. In the everyday world there was always the chance of interruption, however remote the time and place. A certain hatred of discovery haunts the most legitimate passion, and restrains it with an educated sense of the policeman round the corner. The lovers know at least that their time is limited. But unless the Angel with the Flaming Sword came to close the gates of Paradise, Trelawny felt that there was really no obligation save his naked will to terminate the situation. It had the curious effect of making him tongue-tied for sixty seconds.

It was Leslie who broke the silence.

"Do you remember the first day when we found the ship, and brought those clothes back, and you shaved, and got into evening dress?"

"I made a fool of myself!" said Trelawny dryly.

"And I was so rude! I don't think you ever realized why—"

"I should say the exhibition I made of myself was quite enough to madden anyone with a sense of the ridiculous!"

"It wasn't that—it was that it made you seem so far off. You were Major Trelawny again, as you had been on the *Aristo*, and I felt that if I took my proper place I should just fall into the background and never speak to you again. It made me savage—it seemed so unfair!"

He laughed a little, very much amused, and a little comforted. For his hurt vanity was soothed by her point of view. She had seen him as superior, rather than ridiculous, on the occasion in question, and he was reinstated in his own esteem. It had not occurred to him that broadcloth was a hall-mark of exalted social position to her until her next words.

"Do you know, Miles, I have never worn evening dress in my life?"

"No?" he said idly, looking up at her with half-shut smiling eyes. "Did you never go to parties?"

"Oh, yes, sometimes, of a kind. Not what you would call parties!" she added with humble taste. "But I mean I have never worn a low-necked dress. My people thought it wrong." She looked at him half wistfully, under her lashes, afraid to compete with the girls he had known, even in fancy. The display of dazzling skins, and the indecency of bare necks, seemed a daring fascination that was unsuited to her Methodist upbringing.

"I dare say I should look horrid," she said. "I am so brown, and it wouldn't suit me."

Of all innocent lips into which Satan ever put temptation, those were surely the most innocent. Nor could Trelawny himself have guessed that it would make the tiny spark for the tinder to catch in another minute.

"You would look lovely!" he said, and he was simply

stating an honest conviction. "Do you know, Leslie, you've got a beautiful figure?"

He saw her flush with pleasure, merely at his praise, and stretched up his hand to lay it idly on her warm breast under the muslin shirt. Then he raised himself, rather suddenly, and sat up, taking her in his arms to kiss the sunburnt throat she had despised. The muslin shirt had no impeding collar, and he pressed his lips half savagely against the side of her neck till a little pulse there throbbed angrily, and she began to struggle.

"Let me go!" she said faintly. "You are hurting me!"

"Turn your head," he urged hurriedly. "Let me kiss your neck again—the other side will be jealous!"

She flung her head back, gasping, and met his eyes. How did she know what he was asking her? There was no shame of life put into words then, but she suddenly grew from girl to woman as their eyes met, and a great shudder passed over all her limbs. For however narrow might have been her existence in the suburbs of an English provincial town, it was impossible that she could keep her ignorance under the circumstances of travelling in the Bush amongst savage races and savage dangers. Certain facts of sex and humanity had had to be thrust upon her for her own safeguarding. Her brother would see that she was instructed, the while he rigidly preached the wages of sin and the strict laws of prudery. She knew, however—she knew. Trelawny's eyes were a plain demand, and she answered it as definitely in words as if he had spoken.

"No! no!—not that!—I will not—I cannot!"

And then the shame of the confession between them drew them apart from each other, never to be quite the same again, unless the barrier should be broken down and they twain should be one flesh.

* * * * *

In the morning she could not believe it.

She had gone to the cave in silence, with hanging head, and he had not even attempted to follow her.

It seemed that she had compassed her own salvation with that outspoken No ! and he had accepted it. Perhaps he was ashamed. Perhaps he had repented of the savage instinct which she had recognized and cried out against with the shreds of her civilization. It seemed as if it must be so, for he had gone off to the daily routine of gathering firewood and hunting for food, and she had hardly seen him all day. She did not even know which direction he had taken, though she thought he had gone to the Gorge ; and curiously enough she did not worry herself as she almost always did when he was absent for some hours together. For the first time she was afraid of him, and glad of his absence.

In the late afternoon she was sitting on the cliff in the shadow of the beacon, keeping her monotonous vigil for the ship that never came, and working at the making of the national flag that they had planned. It was to be a white ensign, for they had no other background for the Union Jack. One of the small sheets from Gideon Ivermay's cabin was sacrificed, and on this they planned out the red stripes from the American flag, and used the captain's old serge suit for the necessary blue. Never was a more heterogeneous Union Jack contrived, perhaps, and the red crosses of St. Patrick and St. George and the white cross of St. Andrew threatened to be very wrong indeed in the width of the stripes, for neither Leslie nor Trelawny could rightly remember the gradations. But it was a Union Jack in effect, and it was to be run up from the flagstaff that Trelawny had fashioned before the log-hut claiming the Island as a British possession. Leslie sewed laboriously at the red and blue patchwork with a big needle, found in a "housewife" in the for'ard cabin, and coarse thread. It was not necessary to use the sailmaker's outfit, for the cotton sheet was not difficult to work upon, though it was cumbersome. She was absorbed in her task even to the closing of her quick ears, and did not hear Trelawny coming over the grass of the cliff until he actually reached her and sat

down by her side. Then her senses acknowledged him by a leap that seemed to send all the blood into her heart, making it throb with painful life.

"What are you doing?" he said quietly.

"Making the flag. Look! is this right?" She spread it out over her knees for his inspection, not raising her own eyes.

"Yes, I think so."

There was a pause, while the big needle went in and out clumsily, and the girl fought to keep her hands steady. His manner was so normal that she thought she had nothing to fear, but her nerves hardly obeyed her brain as yet.

"Leslie," he said suddenly, "did I frighten you last night?"

"Yes—"

"You knew what I meant—"

"Yes." The assent seemed mechanical. She had no control over her lips.

"You thought it was a wicked thing to suggest because there's no parson here to say a few words over us?"

She thought her lips said Yes again. She did not know.

"Yet you promised me that if we ever *were* rescued"—his strong, masculine eyes swept the empty horizon with a sort of derision—"and I made it all right with that other woman, that you would be my wife!"

"Yes—"

"You know what that means?"

"Yes—"

"And you wouldn't be afraid then?"

She was helplessly silent. She knew that he took her No for granted—a reasonable denial of fear that followed the legal ceremony. But here, in the bare truth of Nature set far from conventional decencies, she felt that legality had nothing at all to do with it. It was the union of love that would cast out fear. Once she was sure of herself and him it made no difference whether they were sanctioned by all the laws and churches in the

world, or whether they had no consent but their own to ask on a dot of an island, God knew where in the world. If she were frightened here she would be frightened in England, and marriage had no business with fear.

" You think the church service makes it all right ? If we can find a Prayer Book on the schooner I'll go through any form of words with you that you like, in all reverence ! But what's the difference, Leslie ? "

She could not answer that sophistry. She put her hand straight on the crux of the difficulty. " *I was* frightened," she said, " so I knew it was wrong."

He was silent for a minute, surprised by the simplicity of the position she had taken. She thought she had answered the whole question ; but she had not reckoned for his character any more than he had done for hers. Trelawny had been wont to ride very straight to hounds when he was in England. He went for his objects in life exactly as he went across country, without opening gates or going round by the road.

" Look here," he said after a pause, " if you are building on the hope of rescue, I don't believe we ever shall be rescued. I told you that before. I believe we've got to live out all the rest of our lives on this blessed Island, and unless we make up our minds to walk out into the sea and drown, or put a bullet into each other from the ship's stores, we had better face the inevitable. I give you my word that if a miracle happens and we *are* found, I'll make you my wife legally the minute we can get hold of a parson. But for God's sake don't put a chimera between us. We've found each other, heart and soul, in this devilish place, and it's the one thing that makes life worth living to us—to have each other turns the desert into a paradise. But we're man and woman, and we can't live like angels. Sooner or later—it's simply marking time—"

He stopped suddenly, and altered his tone. " You said you loved me, little one ! "

" Yes ! " she said again. Oh, if those stiff lips would only frame some other word for her !

"Don't be afraid of me—don't shrink from me—can't you feel how I want you? It isn't only now—it's for always. It would be the same in any part of the world."

She suddenly put her hands over her eyes and began to sob, rocking herself to and fro. She had never really felt her God a friend; He had been introduced to her rather as a stern mentor. But now she felt as if He had all at once deserted her. Her tears were by no means a feminine trick to gain time or disarm the assailant. She was ashamed of them; but they arose from despair.

They did not deter Trelawny, either. He was sorry for her, but he thought the breakdown inevitable and rather welcomed the sign of weakness.

"Poor little girl!" he said fondly, slipping his arm round the rocking figure and pressing her against him with a certain proprietary sense already. "I won't worry you any more just now. Only I want you to get used to the thought of it—it's so inevitable, sweetheart. You'll understand yourself better some day."

His very kindness and lack of passion made her feel the desperation of her plight. As he rose from the grass and walked back to the cave to light the fire for the cooking of the evening meal, she heard his ominous words echoed in his footsteps, and felt as a bird might do, just caught and caged:

"It's so inevitable, sweetheart!"

CHAPTER XIV

“ Since thou art not as these are, go thy ways;
Thou hast no part in all my nights and days.
Lie still, sleep on, be glad—as such things be;
Thou couldst not watch with me.”

A. C. SWINBURNE.

THE March winds gave way in part to April showers; but with the magnificence of the tropics the winds had the fury of a hurricane, and the showers were as if the heavens opened and poured a flood upon the earth. The first rainy day tested the strength of Trelawny's workmanship, and threatened to wash out his hut; but the double bamboos stood the strain of the winds, and the roof held, save for one slight displacement that he renovated, while the thatch proved watertight to his immense satisfaction. In between whiles the weather was again perfect—warm, blue days, with little or no wind, during which he had time to secure himself and the spoils brought from the *Golden Gate*. He had stored nearly all that he could now, and was beginning the foundations of yet another storehouse for all the heavier fittings he hoped to get out of the schooner before she was broken up. The rainy days were at present few and far between; but when they did come they were persistent, and were an augur for the future.

Leslie still occupied the inner cave with its sweet bed of dried grass on the shelf of rock, though Trelawny had made a rough screen for her and set up a dressing-table in the outer cave. It had come to be as a place of refuge to her own mind, and instead of resenting it she was relieved to think of Trelawny in the hut, at a little distance. She was not physically afraid of him, for she knew by perfect instinct that he would never use

violence to her. It was the strength of her own will that she doubted, the bewildering vacillation of her own mind which could not but accept his arguments and only clung blindly to the taught theory of her whole life without being able to support it logically. Having once put his good resolutions behind him, Trelawny was at least consistent in his attitude ; the same plea met her at all points, in the look in his eyes, in the touch of his hands, in the tone of his voice, without actual words. "Do let us be happy!" was the spirit of his whole relations with her, and the wooing world around interpreted the saying night and day—"Do let us be happy!" smiled the blue sky—"Let us be happy!" laughed the sunset sea—"Happy! happy! happy!" sang the winds. The butterflies flashed it in their wings, and the scent of the flowers breathed it on the night air. All Nature conspired to urge the man's petition, and there was only the will of one weak girl to withstand the mighty force, with her heart already a traitor and gone over to the enemy !

For she did long to yield. Not for any sensual reason, for Leslie Mackelt was not a consciously passionate woman, nor indeed had she any experience to make sexual intercourse a temptation. It was rather the other way—a thing of unknown terror and some distaste. But it was the desire to give, to bestow the crown of surrender as a proof of love, that made even the sense of sacrifice the more reason for giving. For some mysterious demand of man's mind—at present hid from her—Trelawny pleaded for this final gift as for the one thing needful ; and Leslie had the supreme love-instinct to beggar herself in self's immolation. There are only two reasons why women are ever seduced by men before passion is any personal temptation to them—one is curiosity, and the other is the desire to give. Satisfy the first, and a woman with a cold temperament, or ungenerous, will never slip again. But for the nature which can feel the joy of giving, and which has the unstinted power to love, there is no security.

Leslie Mackelt began to wonder how long her resolution would hold out, and to measure its endurance by the actual passing of days. It was the first step which had counted—so long as she looked at him with ignorant eyes, Trelawny had held to his good intentions even though they paved the way to Hell for him ; but when that barrier was broken down by chance, once she had understood him without his having to put his difficulty into words, he had changed his mind for good and all, and brought all his strength of will to reduce the fortress of her resistance. It seemed practically impossible to him that they should be rescued, for years at any rate ; and when, if ever they were, it only remained to ratify the tie. All law and order, the very structure of civilization, had become like a myth amongst the bare realities of life on the Island. Food and shelter and warmth, increasing health as the natural outcome of these and their attainment, and again the supreme instincts of sex as the outcome of health—that was all that remained. For the rest, they were man and woman, and he had found her fair.

Leslie had never yet been into the hut since its completion. Though she had helped to get the roof on, and to fix the door on the Australian principle, since Trelawny had actually furnished it she would not set a foot inside. At first it had been a kind of obstinate jealousy of the work that separated him from her ; but later some instinct seemed to have set her against it, and now she began to see why. For without explanation she knew that it had become as a bridal chamber to him, and that his continued arrangement and improvement had one aim in view. The night that she set her foot across that threshold was the last of her maidenhood. Sometimes, when she heard him whistling or singing cheerily from the inside of the hut, while the soft warm rain fell steadily upon the fruitful earth, she was ludicrously reminded of the birds, nest-building in the youth of the year. He had planted and trained a great vine all about the portal and front of the hut, and it had taken hold and climbed, throwing out great green leaves,

and masses of sweet, white flowers ; and each side of the doorway were two wild orange trees, just opening their typical blossoms. The place was becoming a bower.

There had been a week of rainy weather in the middle of April ; but the fifteenth—she marked that date again—was a perfect day. The blue sky and the high white clouds promised fair weather, and invited to an excursion. Trelawny suggested their going over to the *Golden Gate* to bring away the last of the fittings which he had already packed and stacked for removal ; and because inaction was becoming torture the girl assented eagerly. While they had something to do the crisis that was in both their minds remained in abeyance, and there seemed always some fresh corner to explore on the schooner, the chance of some cunning contrivance for storage that they had overlooked. She took a bundle of such food as they might want, and a bottle of fresh water, meaning to boil it on the ship and make coffee in honour of the occasion. It was seldom that they allowed themselves the luxury of tea or coffee, for their store was by no means inexhaustible.

" I've been wondering whether I couldn't make some sort of a raft and rig it up with those spare sails," said Trelawny, as they sat over their meal in the shadow of the galley. It was too hot to go inside, for Leslie had been cooking on the oil stove. " I should like to get round the Island by sea—I should learn a lot more about the currents and the possible landing-places."

A shadow of anxiety crossed the girl's face. " What about the sharks ? " she said. " We saw some on the north side, you know."

" There are plenty of weapons on board to dispose of them, and enough ammunition that isn't spoilt."

" It doesn't sound very safe," she said uneasily, " but you might try it inside the reef first. What would you make it of ? "

" Bamboo. I've seen native rafts in Mauritius. If I took a light out after dark the fish would simply swarm round me. I could scoop 'em in, and we could begin a store of dried fish."

"Yes, I think we ought to set about storing food. The season seems getting so stormy," Leslie agreed.

"We'll sun-dry the fish. The difficulty will be keeping the sea-birds off them. I wonder if we could rig up a scarecrow out of the captain's old clothes! They're too stiff with salt to be of any other earthly use."

"You forget the flag! I've used most of his trousers for that. No you'd better net your fish. If you could make me a shuttle I could net a finer mesh than those we have."

"I'll try," said Trelawny rather doubtfully. (He had an idea that a shuttle was something like a spinning-wheel.) "I wish there were a brain in one's left hand, Leslie."

"What *do* you mean!"

"Well, there does seem to be a brain in one's right," he remarked, spreading out his hard hands, shapely still for all their rough work. "It does its work by instinct. But one's left hand is such a fool!"

They both laughed, Leslie more genuinely than she had for days. The matter-of-fact level of the conversation was reassuring, and, though she did not like the idea of the raft it was prudent to catch fish in larger quantities than was possible in the rock pools, and to store them, and anything that diverted Trelawny's immediate attention from herself was becoming desirable. She was thankful for the respite, and fell back into the old fashion of their comradeship, discussing the best means of provision for the future, and the prudence of beginning some rough plantations for next year's crops. The plantains were doing well, and Trelawny had a desperate scheme for cultivating the wild cane and yam. He had already cut and planted the few potatoes that he had found on board, and had enriched the soil with the guano which was easily obtainable about the coast, after methods which he had seen in Mauritius. Had the *Golden Gate* carried a more varied cargo, they might have had grain or seeds to sow; but her stores were nearly all such as could not be replaced.

The morning had been exceptionally fine, and had

given no hint of bad weather. But with one of those rapid changes that belong exclusively to the tropics, the clouds gathered about noon, and by one o'clock there was a sudden storm—so sudden that Trelawny and Leslie had barely time to take shelter in "G.I.'s" cabin before the great drops were raining on the deck like angry coins, and out of a gathering pile of cloud ran one jagged streak of lightning right down to the horizon, with a splitting clatter of thunder hard upon its heels. It was only one arrow of flame and one reverberating echo from end to end of the heavens; and then as suddenly as it had come the storm rolled off northwards, and left the sky clear again, with nothing to tell of its happening save the wet decks.

Leslie had put her hands up to her ears with the involuntary recoil of highly strung people; and Trelawny laughed at her.

"You will have to get used to a good deal more of *that*, later in the year!" he said teasingly. "I suppose, I shall find you burying yourself like a tortoise under heaps of seaweed at the back of the cave!"

"I can't help it!" remonstrated the girl. "Thunder and lightning always make me tingle all over, and gasp for breath."

"By Jove! that was a flash, too! Enough to split a dozen of our largest trees. I expect it has done its work somewhere."

But he did not realize how true his words were till a few hours later.

In the cool of the afternoon they started for home, laden as usual with odds and ends from the cabins and the hatches. They threaded their way through the mangrove swamp in silence, Trewlany's only remark being a joking one about the crabs which Leslie still stoutly refused to kill in order to obtain their coloured shells as ornaments for the hut. She shied off any reference to the little log-cabin however, and was glad when they left the evil-smelling swamp behind them and reached the bit of bush that skirted the south-west of the cliff. But here Trelawny paused.

"Do let us sit down and rest a few minutes, Leslie," he said, shifting his burden from one shoulder to the other. "I'm confoundedly hot."

"It was airless in there. But we mustn't be long, or the light will be gone."

"Well, sit down for a minute, anyway."

He took the girl's burden from her, and resting his hands on her shoulders pushed her gently down to the roots of a great ficus. His very touch made her uneasy, the more so when she found him seating himself by her side without saying anything. Silence always seemed ominous now. The next instant he had slipped his arm round her waist, and forced her head back against his shoulder to kiss her lips.

"The first kiss to-day!" he whispered. "I do think I am forbearing—"

"Oh, Miles, please don't!"

But there was no mercy now in Trelawny. He thought it really better for both of them that she should give way, and he did not realize how much the lack of an audience had influenced his own principles. There was absolutely no one in the universe for them save their two selves; and what men and women will say and do under such circumstances is a totally different thing to a courtship chaperoned by a well-populated world.

"The house is quite ready for you, my darling. Come to me to-night—will you?"

She had known and feared that. Yet his wooing was so utterly gentle that she was disarmed. At the least hint of roughness she would have fought. Here, in the warm bush, it simply seemed that her resolution was slipping away from her, not broken down, but melting in his arms.

"It isn't wrong, Leslie—I wouldn't ask you if it were really wrong. Can't you see that it's all right—all through Nature—"

A pair of butterflies, male and female, fluttered past them into the warm sunset just beyond the outskirts of the bush where they sat. The call of a wild pigeon to his mate broke the stillness. Two brilliant

lizards ran across the ground at their feet—a pair again. It was the season of mating. She pushed him from her for the last time in a dying struggle, and rose to her feet feeling giddy and faint.

She had the strength not to say Yes. But she had lost the power to say No.

They climbed the last slopes in silence, but as they emerged on to the cliff Trelawny had begun to whistle—the soft full notes that sounded so like the nesting-call of the birds. The girl turned her face to the cool breath of the sea, but her eyes were blind and dazed and she saw nothing. The first she knew of anything to break the usual picture was Trelawny's astonished pause. The whistle stopped, and some indefinable change seemed to come into the whole atmosphere.

"By Jove!" he said, "the beacon's on fire!"

It was quite true. The great pile was throwing out volumes of smoke on all sides, and from the top sprang a great fork of flame that jetted out in fresh directions even as they approached. The brief storm that had passed over them on board the *Golden Gate* had indeed 'done its work,' as Trelawny said. That one jagged fork of flame had fired the dry wood of the beacon with more certainty than any effort to get it alight on their part could have done.

At the sight of all their labour being wasted for no purpose both Leslie and Trelawny started forward, running at the top of their speed, and heedlessly casting their burdens down on the grass of the cliff while they went to the rescue. But at the top of the cliff they stopped as if turned to stone, by mutual consent, and stared out to the horizon as once before.

For there, beyond the white surf tossing on the reefs, was a second ship—a ship with great sails and a low funnel that showed that she had auxiliary steam. She was not a mere trail of smoke upon the horizon this time, but a big tangible object in the blue sea just beyond the dreaded barrier, and so close that they could see what she was doing. It became certain in a moment or two that she had come close in to the

Island attracted by the red flare of the beacon, and that she was lowering a boat to investigate the cause. So their intention had been fulfilled without their actual agency, and the collection of firewood, piled high upon the cliff, had flared a message for them and in their absence wrought their delivery.

It was so sudden that for the moment they seemed stunned, and stood staring at the movements of the boat which evidently intended to try and find a passage past the reefs to the shore. But Trelawny's excursions into those waters had taught him the dangers of the coast, and the impossibility of even a small boat coming in safely at low tide. He had swum out to the reef again and again, and in spite of Leslie's fear of sharks had explored the stretch of water along this western shore. He knew, from one glance at the boat, that she stood little or no chance against the perils of that bay after dark. A lightning survey of the situation convinced him that if they were to be rescued the ship must wait for them until daylight, and then send a boat ashore, when the tide would be high.

He turned and shouted to Leslie as if she were a comrade in a storm, or hundreds of yards lay between them instead of a few feet.

"Go and get me a bamboo pole—quick! and a bundle of fern for a torch."

They had grown expert in the making of these latter, did one of them want to go any distance from the cave after dark. A quantity of dry fern bound round with green creeper, leaving the fronded heads free, was easily set alight and would burn wildly, gradually working down to the stalks by which they were carried. Since their discoveries in the *Golden Gate* they had improved the flare of their torch by soaking in oil, and the effect was visible for a long distance, much farther than the ship's lanterns. Leslie sped away, deer-footed, to the cave, and came back in record time with the long pole and the fern torch. Trelawny, never removing his eyes from the boat, thrust the pole into the bundle of fern, and lighting it quickly from the beacon proceeded to move

it to and fro to catch the attention of those on board.

For a minute the girl watched him, fascinated, for she did not understand what he was doing ; then she realized that he was talking to the people—the strange people from another world, who had come to rescue them !—and that they were answering with a flag. It was fortunate that the quickly dying light of sunset was behind them, as otherwise Trelawny could not have distinguished the dipping and raising of the little object at that distance ; but the strange sign-language of semaphore was written in black for him upon the brilliant colours of the sky, and his own flaring torch was far more legible to them against the dark woods behind.

The mysterious "flag-wagging" speech went on for some twenty minutes before the long pole slid to the earth between Trelawny's hands, and the girl dared to ask a question.

"What are you doing ? Have you made them understand ?"

"Yes—oh, yes !" His voice was as hoarse as hers. "They are going to lie there all night and wait for us. They will take us off in the morning—"

"All night ! In the morning ! Why not now ?"

"They can't pass the reef—I warned them. It would be dark before we could get back. They must have daylight and high tide. There's no moon to-night, or we might have risked it."

"Are you sure—they won't go away—and leave us ?" She knew that her voice was awful, but she did not know how awful until she heard the sharp fear in his.

"No—oh, no ! How can you say that ? But I shall sit and watch all night—I shall keep vigil—"

Then she laughed harshly. "You had much better lie down and go to sleep—we both had. We could not make them stop if they wanted to desert us, though we stayed awake for ever. We should only see them go !"

"But they won't go, I tell you !" he said, almost querulously. "They are casting anchor—there ! I told you so ! The ship is lying to. She is a Mission boat, on a special trip round the Polynesian Islands and

she ran out of her course a bit. There are passengers on board—she's a big boat—they would not dare to leave us."

He was almost incoherent. The sudden ending of the resignation to which he had tried to accustom himself seemed to have turned his brain for the moment. He had mentally drugged himself to think that it could not end; and now it had ended, quite abruptly, in a flash of hope. Curiously enough it was the girl who was the more collected. She turned away after one last strange look at the ship, with a slight shrug of her shoulders.

"Anyhow, we must eat if we have to wait, and you had far better sleep. I will go and make supper and bring it up here, if you like to keep watch."

There was a faint irony in her tones, but he was too absorbed to resent it. He saw her spring down the slope like a deer while he began to pace restlessly up and down, with his eyes alternately on the steadily burning beacon and the outlines of the ship already growing dim in the increasing darkness until she began to show her lamps. And he was still walking up and down when the girl returned, bringing with her a carefully cooked meal.

"There is no reason to keep anything now, I suppose, so I opened one or two of the tins," she said, setting down one thing after another on the level turf of the cliff. She was quite composed, and hardly turned her eyes seawards, though he could not keep his own away. "See, there is fish, and meat, and coffee—all hot, but I am afraid they will soon get cold unless you pull some of this burning wood from the beacon and make another fire. And I have some biscuits and jam as well; but let us eat this first."

She sat down quite calmly, at a safe distance from falling sparks from the beacon, and began to eat with apparent relish. He laughed half deliriously, feeling choked, and a bit of a fool. "Your nerve is better than mine!" he said.

She turned her great heavy eyes to his face, and looked at him sombrely across the dusk. Somehow it

seemed that their positions were suddenly reversed, and she was very much the older of the two. "I am not quite so keen as you are at getting off, perhaps," she said quietly. "You see, a different fate awaits me in the real world!"

"A big fortune, anyway," he tried to say kindly. The whole situation seemed to have thrown him off his balance, so that he hardly knew what he was saying or eating.

She did not answer, and long afterwards he shivered at the remembrance of those well-meaning words of his, and her utter silence. It seemed to him the blunder of his life, and he wondered how she had endured it so patiently. Why had he babbled of material things just then, the little markets of the world that did not yet touch them? Of all strange things in this unofficial honeymoon that ludicrous supper on the edge of the cliff always struck him in memory as the most bizarre—the false air of festivity in such luxuries as coffee and fish and meat, and the unusual taste of the biscuit and jam when the girl fetched them after the first part of the repast was done. He wished quite definitely that the last meal there had been one of simple wild fruit and clear water—the hard, plain fare that they had been thankful for in the first weeks of their sojourn.

He remembered too, long afterwards (oh, how long!) that she had gathered up the empty dishes in her hands when it was over, and turned away with the same air of perfect unconcern.

"I shall wash these and stack them in case we want to take them with us," she said. "I suppose you will stay up here, won't you? I should indulge myself and smoke, if I were you. But I hope you will get a little sleep."

Then he had suddenly awakened from his trance for a few minutes, and had followed her down to the cave, to the old spot where they had spent so many mornings and evenings—a place of memories, haunted with passion and pain and rich joy, all the increase and development of life. And there he had taken her in

his arms and kissed her again, with a tenderness that tortured him to think of, lest it was not tender enough.

"Leslie," he said, "this is only the beginning for us, you know. You won't forget that we arranged? We're going back into the world—but you promised—"

She suddenly stopped his lips with her own, and kissed him with a kind of passionate protest. He held her and murmured over her . . . and yet she felt, as she turned away to the cave, that some breath from a colder land had blown between them, that it was indeed over.

Trelawny did not go back to his vigil on the cliff. The beacon still flared high in the sky, but he left it and walked with slow steps towards the deserted hut. It was suddenly certain in his mind that he need keep no watch, that they would be taken off on to the ship in the morning, and that he could lie down as usual, though he did not think he should close his eyes. Leslie saw him go. She stood a minute at the mouth of the cave, watching him draw near the hut and enter the dark doorway. She waited to see if he reappeared, but he did not. Then she went to her own rough couch for the last time, and lay down on the soft grass heaped on its bed of rock.

She lay there for a long time in utter stillness, with no hope of sleep. Through the opening that led into the outer cave she had been wont to hear Trelawny's even breaths, and felt it a protection in the depths of the night; but she could not hear him to-night—the last night of their mutual solitude—for the hut was much too far off, and she might never feel so near to him again through the exquisite darkness. A sense of the loneliness of parting surged up from her heart, all over her body, so that she writhed as if in physical pain. This was the end of it all. She made no account of his protestations that it was but the beginning of a new life for them, for her mind swung back with a reaction to the old track of her teaching and traditions, and she did not mean to keep him to his promise to break his troth with Edna Carrington. She did not, indeed, mean to allow

him to be disloyal. She had given way in the stress of her love for him, given in so far that she had fed her hunger for his caresses under the excuse of a vague, future marriage. But her rigid sense of duty came back upon her with the first link with civilization, and she condemned her own consent as dishonourable, with her mind, and while her heart cried for quarter.

There was no tie between them ; but that was not the worst to her. She had not given supremely to the utmost that was in her. She had held back one gift for which he had asked, hoarding her treasure like a miser, and now in the flashlight of her agony she saw herself as a failure even in love. It would have been sin of course —the conventional morality of her creed told her so—but in a supreme moment her womanhood rose superior to creeds. And somehow she felt that it was the Devil who would have gloated over her wickedness—but that God would have understood. If it had been a temptation to her she might have called it vice; but she recognized it only as a chance to beggar herself with one act of utter abnegation, and this she had refused.

The burden of remorse became intolerable. She sprang up at last and crept into the outer cave, her little bare feet making no sound at all on the smooth sand. She skirted the dried seaweed still lying there in heaps, and went on up over the rocks to the coarse grass, and so to the clearing where the hut stood. The fruit trees each side of the door had flowered, and the scent of the orange blossoms was unmistakable, so that when her feet touched the fatal threshold she hesitated, as one who leaves something behind. But it was her youth that she sacrificed.

There was no light in the hut save what fell through the open doorway behind her, but she could see the bed where Trelawny was lying. The narrow bunk was gone —she had guessed as much with a sweet shudder—and in its place was a wider couch, a double couch, spread with clean linen over a soft bed of dry grass, clean-scented from sun and wind. And on the couch Trelawny was lying as he had flung himself down, and her heart beat

time to her feet, only louder, and the rush of blood in her veins seemed to carry her on to him, until she reached his side and bent down . . . and he was asleep.

No rebuff could have been so direct as this. He was worn out with the excitement of the ship's arrival, and with the excursion earlier in the day, and he had forgotten even to watch lest his precious hope of rescue was stolen from him. No thought of this last night together had kept him awake—no wild hot despair had robbed him of his healthy natural sleep. The passion that had been as fever in his veins seemed to have suddenly departed, at the first cool touch of the outside world. As she stood beside him in the half-darkness that was scented with orange blossoms, she realized what she had come to offer him—and he was asleep.

She made not the least movement that could wake him, but she was not afraid that he would wake now. She knew that he would sleep on, unconscious that she had ever been there. For quite five minutes she stood by him in silence, looking down curiously, as our dead may look at us, at the dim outline of his face that she could gradually see. He was lying on his back, breathing quite regularly, the very recumbency of his powerful body making him intensely masculine. One arm lay stretched across the empty space beside him, as if in possession. For a pang's space—just as long as it takes to feel—she wondered what woman would lie there, beneath the mastery of his strong hand; and then she turned away, stepping lightly out of the hut, and leaving behind her some remnants of her youth, and the man to whom she had offered herself—and he had slept.

* * * * *

Trelawny awoke at sunrise, and ran headlong out of the hut with fear in his eyes and no room in his brain for any thought but that the ship might have gone in the night and left them. But he was rewarded with the sight of her, rocking a little in the flowing tide, but stately and stationary, awaiting them. He found the beacon burnt down to the ground, a blackened heap

of ashes ; but it had served its turn, and they needed it no longer.

By the aid of an improvised flag at the end of his bamboo pole, he caught the attention of those on board and began to signal again, the ship replying from her deck. He explained the tides, and the dangers of the reefs, but he thought that by keeping an eye on his signals he could navigate them in. They promptly began to lower a boat, and without waiting to eat or make a further toilet he ran back to the hut for Gideon Ivermay's trunk which would hold all he wanted to take with him, calling the girl on his way.

By the time Leslie Mackelt made her way to the cliff where Trelawny had returned to signal, the sun was bright in the heavens, and all the familiar beauty of the Island flashed and shimmered with the new day. She was far more composed than he, and had made her appearance as little remarkable as possible, her visible clothing being mostly the draperies of the beautiful Indian shawl ; but she carried a fairly large bundle tied up in a sheet, and its weight was suggested by the fact that she rested it on the ground while she stood in grave silence looking out over the tumbling water of the reef to the nearing boat. It was out of danger now—there were only the shore breakers to manipulate—now the rowers were rushing the heavy boat through the surf—two men jumped ashore, and the strange sound of a keel grating on the sand and shells came upwards to the ears of the castaways as they turned by tacit consent and went down the slope to meet their rescuers.

“ Thank God ! ” Trelawny said simply, as his hand felt the grasp of a fellow man again, and the four who had brought the boat ashore crowded round them in a babel of asking questions and exclamations of wonder.

“ We're the *Enterprise*—the Mission ship, taking stores to all the Islands.—Passengers on board ? *I* should say so ! —We're taking in most of Polynesia, and anyone who likes to prospect with us.—Guess you will, anyway ! —” (They were Americans, every one.) “ How did you come on this God-forsaken spot ? —

Wrecked from the *Aristo*? Never heard of her!—
Been here long? Six months?—Say! if that isn't the
limit!"

Then Trelawny's familiar, powerful voice, confused
with the sing-song drawl—

"Where were they bound? San Francisco?—How
many days?—No, we don't know our latitude even.—
Flung here by some marine earthquake.—Only fifteen
days from San Francisco?—Going straight there?—
Oh, let's get on board, and all explanations to follow!"

It was a mere jumble of words, through which the
girl stood motionless and silent, a queerer figure than
Trelawny in his tumbled flannels, with an outlandish
hat of plaited straw on her head, in the shadow of which
her face looked white and placid, like the mask of a dead
person. Only when the men inquired briskly if they
had any traps they wanted to take with them she said,
"Nothing but this!" and lifted her bundle herself into
the boat. Trelawny became sharply conscious of her
on the instant, and turned to the men with a new ques-
tion, which she heard:

"Are there any ladies on board?"

"You bet! We've a whole company of Nuns—
Sisters of the Seven Sorrows, prospecting on their own
account for a desert island. I should say yours was
just *the* proper coper!"

Every one laughed but the girl. She seemed absolutely indifferent taking her place in the boat with the bundle at her feet, and accosting or answering nobody. But the man who seemed in charge—a young fellow in uniform, apparently a junior mate—spoke again.

"The Mother Superior's just the finest woman I ever struck! She'll take care of your girl for you. My! that woman could command a high jinks crowd with a look, or take over a saloon from Devil's City and run it straight. She's just the greatest thing that ever happened!"

Even in his tense excitement Trelawny was vaguely struck by the force of the young officer's words, and the impression of a personality behind that must have im-

pressed him in some extraordinary fashion to make him speak so, even allowing for his extravagant phrasing. But he was even more conscious of a shadow, something that seemed to emanate from Leslie Mackelt and that chilled him even in his enthusiasm of escape and the pressure of his excitement. It was a subtle sense of change, and the change is rarely all relief and pleasure even after a phase from which we have striven to escape. The force of custom and habit has its bonds. And the change was here, though he had not time or chance to understand it at the moment. Something had happened, that was all he knew—something that was not entirely explained by this sudden shock of events in their apparent destiny.

"Sure you didn't want to bring away any more truck?" said the young mate, as they threaded the treacherous reefs, and found themselves in the toss of outside waters. "If you've been housekeeping six months you must have tossed up considerable property!"

"No, leave it for some other poor devil who might be stranded here!" said Trelawny with a reckless laugh. "There's a whole house for him to start with—furnished too, from the wreck of a schooner we found in a little bay to southward."

"A wreck! A schooner!"—There was a fresh babel of questions and answers, even as the boat came alongside and was brought up below the ladder.

"The *Golden Gate*, from San Francisco. You'll see her if we run past the south coast," said Trelawny, as he turned to help the silent girl up the ship's side. "Oh, there's nothing worth taking on her now, only a spoiled cargo of copra. She was a Yankee—I don't know if her presence in the bay constitutes possession. We left the Union Jack flying at the hut, anyway!"

Still the same clamour of voices, like the painful breaking of a long silence. They buffeted the girl as though they were tangible things, and left her deaf and giddy. She set her foot on the swinging ladder, and felt herself half helped, half lifted up to the deck, amidst more exclamations and questions from strange lips and curious

staring eyes. The world, rolling back on her after the stillness of the solitude, cowed and checked her. She looked back from the new deck to the low, lovely line of shore, the broken foam on the reef, which seemed now like a guardian of safety, the faint outline of the caves—further off a white speck fluttering forlornly, that was their improvised flag, the Union Jack of England—and a great cry to go back rose in her, a wild, pitiful appeal to some God to let her die now and be buried in the silence and the sweetness where she had come into the kingdom of her womanhood—and lost it.

And it was then, with the voiceless prayer in her eyes, that she turned to a company of black-robed women who stood in a group near the gangway, as if waiting to pity and help; and out of them it seemed rose a taller figure with an ineffable face, all power and peace. Leslie Mackelt turned to it as dying men are said to turn to the symbol of the cross, and felt herself drawn as if physically by strong hands.

“Poor child!” said a deep, sweet voice. “Will you come with us, and rest? We are of the Order of the Seven Sorrows, and I am the Mother Superior.”

CHAPTER XV

"I ought to have done more ; once my speech,
And once your answer, and there, the end,
And Edith was henceforth out of reach.
Why, men do more to deserve a friend,
Be rid of a foe, get rich, grow wise,
Nor, folding their arms, stare fate in the face.
Why, better even have burst like a thief
And borne you away to a rock for us two,
In a moment's horror, bright, bloody, and brief,
Then changed to myself again—' I slew
Myself in that moment ; a ruffian lies
Somewhere, your slave, see, born in his place !'"

ROBERT BROWNING

TRELAWNY found himself something of a lion on board the *Enterprise*. Though her business was to carry stores to the various groups of islands, she had plenty of chance passengers unconnected with Missions, for she had actually been down to New Guinea this trip, and had touched at the Solomon Islands; now she was going home, but the stormy season having given a foretaste of its possibilities unusually early, she had been somewhat driven out of her course, and it was due to this that she had sighted the flare of the beacon on the little islet that was supposed to be uninhabited. It was not one of a group, as Trelawny learned, though its nearest neighbours were the Marshall Islands and San Pedro. He had no idea that they were so far north—indeed, he had begun to fancy himself south of the Line—and a faint recurrence of his original terror crossed his mind at the realization of the awful force that had driven them there. No one on the *Enterprise* had any knowledge of the phenomenon that had overtaken the *Aristo* ; they might have heard of it, but storms were always occurring in those waters, and they

remembered no loss of a British steamer, so possibly she had had a miraculous escape with some trifling damage. On the other hand, both passengers and crew were interested in the *Golden Gate*, had seen her when she traded in those seas, and heard all about her disappearance.

"There she is!" exclaimed half a dozen voices as every man on deck hung over the port rail of the *Enterprise* to catch a glimpse of the wreck as they steamed slowly along the southern shore, for the morning was dead calm. "I recollect her in San Francisco harbour!"

"Golly! but she's just hung up!"—

"There's a clean loss for P. Rudd & Co.!"—

"They knew she was gone—they've banked the insurance by now!"—

"How long has she been missing? I never could find any record on board, the log was soaked with salt water and illegible," said Trelawny.

"Why, she was reported as missing last July, and a month later three of her crew came back on another sailing vessel from Honolulu, where they'd been picked up. They said she'd met such weather as never happened and it knocked the sticks out of her!"

"Did they mention a fire?"

"Yes, they did—but every skipper on these routes who knew P. Rudd & Co. said they ought to have stuck to the ship, and only told that yarn of a fire to cover their orders. Copra's so inflammable that if a ship's going to be lost she is always reported as firing her cargo. Adam told the same lie when he wanted to raise dollars! The *Golden Gate* was well covered, and the companies fought the men's evidence like Sacramento lawyers!"

"Well, it was true this time," said Trelawny dryly. "There was a fire—but if they had waited till she ran on the rocks the sea would have put it out for them, and they could have got ashore. Only three men saved, you say?"

"One of them was the Old Man. Never heard of any more."

Trelawny was silent, watching the Island gradually

recede from view as they steered for the north-east. He had wondered if Gideon Ivermay had escaped, or if he were really standing in dead men's shoes at the moment, for he had nothing on that did not belong to the ill-fated passenger. It seemed he need not concern himself about the ownership of the clothes, anyway, nor seek to return them if he could discover the whereabouts of the rightful wearer. They would serve his turn for the voyage, and he could see about a fresh outfit in San Francisco. Neither he nor Leslie had ever discovered any memoranda or letters about the cabin, and the only clue to Gideon Ivermay's identity was in one of his books, where in faded ink, below his name was written "Balliol College, Oxford."

The few passengers left on the *Enterprise* were all men, with the exception of the Nuns. The ship had started with a much fuller list—small officials wishing to get back to billets in the larger islands, German traders going to smaller groups, tourists whose love of adventure took them a little out of the beaten track, and inclined them to sample Polynesia rather than Los Angeles. One by one these units had drifted away, left behind on their destined islands, or persuaded to stay somewhere on the route for more than the few hours that the *Enterprise* remained, and chance the return journey on a smaller vessel. The Nuns joined her at Bougainville, where they had been on a mission of inquiry for a place to establish a leper station—hence the mate's assertion that they were looking for a desert island. Trelawny heard with a marvel of mixed loathing and respect for the religious fervour that could drive delicate women even to prospect for such a mission. But now everyone was homeward bound, for the time at least, and the heterogeneous collection of travellers left on the *Enterprise* made the rescued man the centre of attraction. They were a little tired of playing euchre in the evening, and hearing each other lie as to their adventures, and the story of Trelawny's exile had the novel zest of a fairy tale.

He might have borrowed clothes from every man on

board had he wished, and smoked and drunk himself sick at their expense. Every purse was open to him, and the hospitality of every man's house when they reached port. He did not drink more than moderately, but he did satisfy his craving of the last few months for tobacco, and during the fortnight before they reached land he rarely had a clean tongue. Oh, it was good to talk to men again, and to hear the news of the world, even that corner of it from whence they came and which had but small interest for him ! It was good to feel that he was of it once more, too, and could make plans for a future not destined to be passed in the solitude of unending seas !

All these things rather engrossed Miles Trelawny's immediate attention, and distracted him from thinking of his late companion. His feeling for her had not altered, it was too closely grown into the roots of his nature ; but it was in abeyance, and not forced into the foreground of his mind by propinquity. For it chanced that he did not see Leslie Mackelt after she came on board, and she fell, naturally it seemed, into the keeping of the Nuns. He heard the next day that she had turned faint and swooned after the Mother Superior had led her away out of reach of inquisitive eyes, and they had kept her in her cabin. He inquired frequently, of course, and sent her messages, and was told that she had succumbed to a slight attack of fever that the Sisters were nursing devotedly. She would no doubt be all right in a few days, and in the meantime he realized that it was just as well that she should be in the care of the women on board—good women, whose lives were as blameless guardian angels'—for her position as his sole companion on the Island gave her a possible interest to the men on board that was not desirable. He had known it vaguely with the return to civilization, but it was forced on his attention one evening in the smoking-room by a careless scrap of talk not intended for his ears. He had been sitting in a corner, waiting for some recent acquaintances to make up a poker party, when two men entered without seeing him, and began to talk.

They had been drinking cock-tails, which had loosened their tongues ; but to do them justice they meant no harm—their speech was the carelessness of a coarse sense of humour.

“ Where’s the girl ? ” said one.

“ Sick,” responded the other. “ And locked up amongst the nuns ! ”

“ I bet you that’s a change for her ! ” The first speaker laughed significantly.

“ Well, it’s their job—rescue work,” said the second broadly. “ Guess she’s bound to have a kid.”

“ What can you dam’ well expect ? Alone with that feller for six months——”

Trelawny’s first impulse was to spring up and take the speaker by the throat. He had actually half risen, when a new revelation stopped him. For if he and Leslie had been a few more months on the Island it might have been true. It was not his fault, anyway, that it was not. Within the bounds of a Universe peopled by their two selves this had seemed a natural law ; but with the entrance of public opinion the conventional code of morals made it a subject for shrugging shoulders, and shocked him. Very few people realize how much morality depends upon an audience. It is for this reason that love scenes on the stage are always so pretty and impossible. The same rule applies to books, the reader being always there as judge and jury. In the representation of love, therefore, there is a certain deliberation, whereas real passion is frequently headlong and inartistic. Trelawny was at the moment relieved that he could feel himself and Leslie virtuous, though his audience might be sceptical at first sight. He also saw the propriety of leaving the girl in the chaperonage of the Nuns, and making no effort to approach her. Of course, he would see and speak to her before they left the ship. He was bound to make arrangements for her journey to England, and to see her safely into the care of her friends. There might be certain embarrassments even about this, but it was an affair of the future. In the present he felt thankful that her slight ailment ex-

cused her appearance and kept her out of the way, even though it was misinterpreted in coarse minds.

He was walking up and down the deck the next evening, in company with his friend the mate, who had come ashore on the Island, when they came face to face with a tall, black figure in company with one of the less important Nuns, and Trelawny recognized the Mother Superior. Both he and the officer acknowledged the Sisters, and Trelawny stopped to speak.

"How is Miss Mackelt?" he said in his pleasant, easy manner, but the formal title sounded strange in his own ears.

"She has been very unwell," returned the Mother Superior at once, with a simple directness. She spoke in a voice whose beauty struck Trelawny impressively—the sort of voice that would make common words sound like blessing, and suggested the ring of a flawless bell. "Poor little child! She has had an experience that was enough to unhinge most girls' minds and bodies."

Trelawny recognized the truth of this, though he had not thought of it. But it startled him.

"She isn't seriously ill?" he said.

"No, not seriously. But she has been very feverish and hysterical," said the Nun composedly. "Perfect rest is the best medicine for her, and to allow her to get her mental balance again." As she spoke she smiled, and Trelawny was suddenly aware of an overwhelming sense of beauty and strength combined—such strength as he had never met before in any woman. The Mother Superior's face was so self-reliant and calm that its expression had caught his attention before he realized that she had been a beautiful woman, and indeed was so still. Her features were very nearly perfect, and her eyes beneath their wide brows extraordinarily dominant. He said involuntarily, "I am glad to leave Miss Mackelt in such good hands!"

"You are content to leave her to us, then?" she said, with her compelling eyes upon his face. She was so tall that they were almost level with his own.

"Perfectly!" he answered heartily.

The Mother Superior smiled, and passed on with the other Nun.

Her name in the world had been Louise Malincourt, and she came of a very great English family indeed. Besides being a peer, her father had been a man of science, and had digged a little deeper into theories of life and death than most men. Louise had been brought up as nearly an atheist as is consistent with real knowledge, which is bound to reject atheism the more it learns of law. It was after she was matured in her womanhood that she became a convert to the Roman Catholic faith, and she brought with her all the fervour of the convert and the powers of a very exceptional woman in any sphere of life. She had attained to the position of Mother Superior of an educational Order, but her capabilities reached out beyond, to a final attainment of devotion and self-sacrifice with the urgency of the fanatic. She herself, and a certain number of her Order, had desired to establish a hospital and refuge for leprosy amongst the scattered islands of the southern seas, and to pass the rest of their lives in attending on and succouring the most loathsome of diseases, quietly giving up even the little that their devotional life had left them while in Europe. It was a vocation so hard that the Mother Superior had rejected many of the volunteers even of her own Order, and had sifted out those fitted for the task as fine grain is sifted, to remove all chance of a poorer quality.

Leslie Mackelt had never met with anyone like this woman in all her starved and repressed life. The dignity, the elusive something that comes with fine breeding, the beauty, and the strength in Mother Ursula came upon the girl like a veritable hope of salvation at the moment when she had been rendered most vulnerable. She would not have told her story to any other of the Nuns, pure-hearted and charitable though they were ; but to confess to Louise Malincourt was like the relief of tears to a bitter grief. For some days Leslie had been slightly delirious, for the fever was a natural reaction after the physical and mental

strain of the last weeks, and then the change from a perfectly natural and healthy life to a certain confinement and more artificial food on board. With broken sobs and heaving terror the girl gasped out she knew not what of wickedness, clinging to the kind strong hands that seemed to save her from drowning in her own shame—she knew only that it was wickedness, and that she could not repent. This seemed to her a nightmare of punishment.

“Oh, Mother, save me! Make me really sorry—don’t let me feel that I am still mad!—I must be lost! I can’t feel anything but the longing—and the silence—and the sweetness——”

“Hush! hush! my child,” said Mother Ursula calmly. “It will come. This is nothing but a feverish dream. Beyond is God’s mercy!”

Leslie looked up in the implacable beauty of her face with tortured eyes. It seemed that there at last was something to cling to that would not fail her, a faith like a rock, a peace that might one day comfort. She had been singularly friendless all her life, thrown back upon herself, repressed and thwarted. Small wonder that the Mother Superior seemed to her an embodiment of the help for which she prayed. The difference in their religious views seemed no barrier at all; things fell into their proper places, and she was never startled to think that this woman who was gaining an ascendancy over her was what her own people would have called a Papist. Mother Ursula never spoke of creeds to her; she seemed to respect Leslie’s religion, and, indeed, she was shrewd to appreciate the simple rule of life that lay at the root of Leslie’s narrow profession. It was far easier for her to understand than Trelawny. He did not see, because he could not conceive, that the extreme strictness of Leslie’s Methodist teaching was nearer the outer ring of Roman Catholicism than his own easy-going Protestantism, or the milder Nonconformists. He would have put them at opposite ends of the pole. To him Leslie’s pruderies were as frankly out of date as any ridiculous custom

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habit of introspection, the tenacity
she held it, the delicately fine
types she read as easily as a book
know the meaning of a "born Contem
Mackelt was to Louise Malincourt's eyes
There was something further—a fact
from which a weaker woman would have
that to the Mother Superior rather justified
of Providence. For Mother Ursula wanted more
for her great work—her mission to the leprous. And
here into her arms fell Leslie Mackelt with her millions,
as malleable clay to her influence, the tool of her will
did she so choose. And after deliberate thought she
did choose, no more afraid of any imputation of self-
interest or avarice than she was of the change of creed
which she foresaw would be the outcome of contact
with her own personality, and the rupture with all
Leslie's own family in consequence.

It would have been quite impossible to accuse Louise
Malincourt of doing evil that good might come, because

VEYMOON

at she was doing
niority as superior
the strongest per-
uld dictate abso-
lic and the Pope
r and this supreme
er authority ; but
t with interference,
ality was recognized
n Church possesses a
eps a comprehension
er existing institution.
ck during the day, but
, the officer of the watch
black figure with a smaller
er Superior would pace up
at leaning on her arm. This
the end of the voyage, when
e north might act like a tonic
s had lent her clothes, though their
y limited ; but they had not en-
ample black that shrouded them,
ressed like a novice, in the white
t chanced they never encountered
hey often talked as if his personality
versation, and there was no difficulty
.woman to read what was in the girl's mind.
one always wanted to do what is right,
her ! " she said wistfully on one occasion. " It is
so dreadful to wake up and suddenly realize how far one
has strayed—it is like being out in the dark on a moon-
less night."

" We carry our own lanterns, my child—the lamp of
Faith."

" Yes, but—some of us—don't take oil in our vessels ! " said the girl very low. " And while the lamp is out we may lose our way, hopelessly."

" No, not hopelessly."

" It seems so, at the time. Oh, Mother, why are there so many pitfalls when we are made so weak ? "

The Mother Superior looked down into the tragic young face with the sudden smile that warmed her own lips and eyes like sunshine. She could not herself have counted the number of girls who had been drawn to her by just that smile, or the young hearts that she had made her own. Only, in the well-known school of her Order, she was recognized to have the most marvellous and lasting influence upon pupils at their most impressionable age.

"Sometimes it seems as if we could only learn to go right by going wrong!" she said gently, and the suggestion helped Leslie as no "word in season" could have done. Half Mother Ursula's power lay in her humanity.

"I wonder if that is true!"

"It makes the dark places very luminous."

The two figures passed on, and the officer of the watch saw them no more.

Trelawny was not up very early on the day they reached San Francisco. He had been talking late in the smoking-room the night before, not drinking, but chatting as men will do on the last night of a voyage, knowing that on the morrow they will go their several ways and may not meet again. When he went into the saloon for breakfast the boat was already in harbour, and many of the passengers had gone on deck. He did not see any of the Nuns, though he was accustomed to their black figures at a table reserved for them, but he supposed that, like others, they had gone on deck; and he presently went up himself, still in a leisurely fashion, for he thought that there was small chance of getting ashore at present. By the after hatch he found his friend the mate, superintending the passengers' baggage, and said "Good morning" to him.

"Cold after the tropics, isn't it?" said the officer with a laughing shiver. "Say! we ought to have waited to rescue you till May or June!"

"No thanks—I'd rather buy a ready-made winter suit in San Francisco!"

"Your friends have gone ashore—got off as soon as the boat came in—hardly waited for the health officer

If we had had smallpox on board I guess they couldn't quarantine the Mother Superior! That's a real marvellous woman—she'd make the Stars and Stripes dance a breakdown if it suited her!"

"Gone!" said Trelawny blankly. "And Miss Mackelt?"

"She's gone too. My! she was looking ratty! They'll nurse her up all right, though. Don't you worry."

"But where have they gone? Surely they left some word for me!" said Trelawny in exasperation. "I'm partly responsible for the girl, anyway. I'm bound to see that she reaches England safely!"

"Oh, that's all right—she's going to travel with them. The Mother Superior's a British subject, like yourself, and going back to her Convent. She'll look after the girl for you—I guess they left a note with one of the stewards."

This was true, though Trelawny did not receive it until some hours later. It was very brief, and had neither beginning nor ending:

"I feel that I did very wrong in ever consenting to your breaking your engagement. But when we talked of this we were both in such extraordinary circumstances that perhaps it was not as disloyal as it seems now. I never wanted to smirch your honour—indeed, I never did. Perhaps now you have realized this also, and I need not have written. But I wanted you to be sure. I expect nothing from you, and I hold you to nothing. I only ask you to forgive me for ever having agreed to it.

LESLIE MACKELT."

There was no good-bye—no hint of where she was going—no conventional expression of friendship or hope to see him again. He recognized in the latter, at least, the extreme honesty that would not lie; they had lived too closely to be conventional with each other. With her disproportionate view of life she had

not only recoiled from the thing she thought to be wrong, but had swept herself and all connection with her suddenly out of his life, to leave him free. That was Leslie Mackelt all over. Even the little stilted phrase about "smirching his honour" was reminiscent of her love of high-flown literature. But it would have taken a woman to read between the lines, to know by instinct the unsteady hand that had written the bald words, the despair of the bitten lips, or—most tell-tale of all!—the stain upon the page where one great hot tear had fallen, and been swept away. They dried with their own heat, those burning tears, and left the brown eyes seared and blistered as if with the breath of hell. Small wonder that Love is blind! His sight was forfeit long ago to æons of such tears. And his votaries are weeping still.

CHAPTER XVI

“ Ah, Love, could thou and I with Fate conspire
To grasp this sorry scheme of things entire,
Would we not shatter it to bits, and then
Remould it nearer to the Heart’s Desire ? ”

OMAR KHAYYĀM.

TERELAWNY was very angry. He did not take much account of Leslie’s childish little letter (it was just what he might have expected from her), but he felt that he was being made rather a fool of, for the time being at any rate. He had no doubt in the background of his mind that he should eventually do as he had intended, and make a clean breast of the whole matter to Edna, who would certainly release him from his engagement ; but it was not a pleasant thing to look forward to, and he had no authority from Leslie to go upon, even—she had washed her hands of the matter, and left him to stand by himself. He did not alter his purpose ; it had become too serious a thing between them, and he was not going to spoil his life or hers for the want of plain speaking. But he resented having to pay so heavily for his happiness before it was actually in his hands. It did not occur to him that the girl was paying too, more heavily, perhaps, in her own way.

At any rate, he had lost sight of Leslie Mackelt in his immediate present, and instead of wiping her out of his memory it had the reverse effect of making him think of her again. He could not find out by what route the Nuns had travelled, or if they had left San Francisco at all ; but he knew that they were going to England, and he half expected to find them on the train, or to fall in with them again on some part of the six days’ journey. He took the most direct route he

could—after some necessary delay before he could obtain money, and had cabled to his own people of his safety—and crossing the United States booked by the first boat at New York. But neither on the train journey, nor at the shipping agents, did he get the least news of the Sisters of the Seven Sorrows and Leslie Mackelt. They had vanished as completely as if the earth had swallowed them up, and Trelawny began to feel his first faint sense of injury from the Mother Superior for taking him so completely at his word and constituting herself Leslie's guardian in his place.

He was bereft of his rights, for it seemed to him as if the girl had been put completely into his hands for a short period of her life to see what he would make of it, and then as completely and suddenly withdrawn by a Providence that mistrusted his methods. He could not exactly say that Providence was not, conventionally, in the right. Only, convention does not find a place in the morality of a desert island, and his conduct could not be judged by such standards.

At Liverpool he walked off the gang plank to meet a tall, grey-haired gentleman of military appearance, who looked hard into his face as if into the face of one risen from the grave, and put a shaking hand on his shoulder while he clasped the other.

"Miles—my *dear* boy!" he said. "We—we had given you up!"

"Father!"—Major Trelawny was a boy again coming home from school, and startled into emotion. "Why, father!—you oughtn't to have taken this long journey alone! Where are the girls?"

He spoke half confusedly, meaning his married sisters, who being older than himself were certainly not girls. But the sight of his old father (Colonel Sir Charles Trelawny was seventy) awoke all the tender home ties. The mother had been dead long years, and Miles was the only boy. His elder sisters had been good to him.

"Muriel's children are down with the measles, and

Anna is rushing back from the Continent to make sure you are really safe and sound!" said Sir Charles, blowing his nose rather hard and trying to laugh. "Miles, how did it all happen? I'm so bewildered still you must forgive my rather losing my head!"

"Come over to the hotel, father, and we'll talk it out over dinner," said the son affectionately. "I'm all here, safe and sound, and shall have the honour of handing over a new British possession to the Government if they care to send a cruiser out to verify my statements. The Union Jack is there anyhow, if the hurricanes haven't begun yet. Such a Jack, father! made out of a sheet and the Stars and Stripes and an old pair of serge trousers!"

Father and son went off arm in arm, two tall, soldierly men, innately proud of each other's company, and a little British in their very stability. The Colonel had been more shaken by his son's death than he showed. He was not quite fit to travel all the way to Cornwall on the morrow, and Miles spent a day in nursing him and telling his tale anew, hearing in return the other side of the story that had reached England.

The ill-fated *Aristo* had not gone down, but she had received damage enough to disable her, and had crawled back on her own route until taken in hand by a passing steamer and towed into Sydney, where her passengers mostly re-embarked on a mail boat, and returned to England by the Atlantic route after all. There had been toll taken amongst them by the storm that had carried Trelawny and Leslie overboard—thirteen deaths were recorded, mainly from the third-class, who were amusing themselves on their own deck. Amongst them was Donald Mackelt, the missionary who was always to be found reading or preaching to the lower-class passengers. So Leslie had lost another brother.

The *Aristo* had reported Miles Trelawny and Leslie Mackelt as drowned amongst the others missing, and the news had come to England as soon as it seemed certain that there was no chance of their having been picked up by a passing boat. Certain bodies had been

recovered (Donald Mackelt's was one of them), and one man had actually drifted on some wreckage carried overboard with him, and been rescued by a sailing ship. Miles Trelawny's family had waited and hoped for three months before they would accept his doom as final. They had barely reconciled themselves before the cable startled them as almost incredible, a mercy too wonderful for truth.

Edna Carrington, it seemed, was abroad. She had gone with her parents to Egypt as soon as Miles's death was accepted, and having got as far as Khartoum they had not yet had time to return. But the news had, of course, been sent on to her, and "She will be back in a fortnight, we expect," Sir Charles said. The Carringtons were neighbours; they had a place in Cornwall not far from High Trelawny, and the meeting could take place conveniently within their own gates. Miles did not ask even in joke if Edna had consoled herself. It was too soon, and the obligation pressing on him made such a jest unpalatable. It chafed him a little that he should be delayed yet longer in setting himself right with his own conscience, but it seemed that there was nothing to do but wait. In the meantime he paid some necessary visits to London to report himself at the War Office, where the Authorities had posted him as missing, and obtain a fortnight's leave to arrange certain business matters and to take up the threads of his life again; after which he returned to Trelawny to make glad his father's heart with his actual bodily presence.

In London he had unfortunately caught cold. It was a chilly spring, and his long sojourn in hot climates had not fitted him to face an English May. He was also, though he did not know it, suffering from much the same attack as Leslie when she got on board the *Enterprise*, the reaction from a simple life, lived entirely in the open air under primitive conditions, in a rarefied atmosphere; only, the man being stronger than the woman, it had been longer deferred. Trelawny thought little of the chill, and neglected it. When Edna did

return he drove over to see her in his own dog-cart in an east wind, and found himself shivering in the drawing-room the while he awaited her, though there was a fire. It was a pretty low-ceilinged room, just the typical drawing-room of a country-house whose inmates run in and out all day, and do not keep it for company. Somebody's work-basket and a riding whip were lying side by side on a small table, and the chintz-covered chairs looked as if they were often sat in, by men as well as women. Trelawny smiled a little as he paced up and down, between the odds and ends that went to make it a delightful place, and thought how unchanged it was, and how changed *he* was in contrast, and tried not to be restless or to shiver. Certainly he must have taken a chill, and be feverish! It was a damned nuisance

Then the door opened, and his fiancée came in.

She was in her habit, having but just returned from a ride, and he remembered with a little pang his assertion to Leslie Mackelt that Edna looked at her best in her habit, and Leslie's ill-disguised jealousy. It was quite true. Edna Carrington was a tall woman with a good figure, but that was not so much the reason as that the habit suggested exercise and fresh air, and both of these suggested Edna. She looked as if her element were soap and water, and there was a certain shrewd amusement in her blue eyes that completed the picture. She came straight up to Trelawny with frank pleasure in her welcome, and putting her hands on his broad shoulders lifted her face for him to kiss. Her cheek felt cool and soft and friendly. Trelawny put his arm round her waist and hugged her, with the enthusiasm of perfect good-fellowship.

"I don't know if I ought to kiss you, Ed," he said, laughing. "I believe I've got a beastly cold!"

"My dear Miles, I hope not! That would be the crown of all your misfortunes. Do sit down and tell me everything! I have felt my head spin ever since I got your father's cable. I wrote from Khartoum—I hope you got it!"

"Yes, it was awfully good of you—a jolly nice letter—just like you!" Trelawny said affectionately. But his head was beginning to ache, and he felt disinclined for the talk that followed. Edna exclaimed and questioned as every one else had done, and teased him a little about his *tête-à-tête* on a desert island with another girl, and the way he must have lived—in rags, and eating nothing but shell-fish, of course! Then her father and mother came in and out, with no compunction about disturbing the lovers (they had been intimate friends for so many years that the position would have seemed absurd), and the same string of questions and answers and desultory talk continued even through lunch, punctuated by "How exciting!"—"Now do tell us what you were doing when the ship rescued you"—"Had you a beard a yard long?"—"Oh, I know you looked like Enoch Arden!"

"On the contrary, I was fairly civilized by then," protested Trelawny. "We had found the wreck of a schooner, and looted her for clothes and food. We had grown fat and dainty on bully-beef and ship's biscuit by that time, I assure you. And I had shaved—on my honour, Edna!"

"I don't believe you—you are ashamed of the spectacle you presented! I should like to ask the people on board the rescue ship!"

"But, Miles—never mind Edna's nonsense!—tell us about the food. How did you cook it?" asked Mrs. Carrington, with the practical interest of the house-keeper.

"Over a wood fire, with big stones for our oven. That was the woman's business more than mine."

"Oh, the woman—your companion. What was she like?"

"She was a very nice girl. She had been very strictly brought up by Methodists, but she had splendid pluck," said Trelawny simply. "I'll tell you who she was—you may have heard of the Mackelt millions?"

"Oh, that old Scotch Canadian, who hoarded his money, and was never known to be very rich till he

died?" said Mr. Carrington. "An engineer who came to own whole railways, wasn't he?"

"Something of that sort. Well, this girl is the heiress."

"My dear Miles, you don't say so! Why, she must be rolling in money."

"Oh, she has a brother or so to share it, and to devote most of it to missions. They are deeply religious people, and the fortune will probably go to the conversion of the heathen. But it did seem funny to be fixed there in the middle of the sea, and to think that that girl had millions that were absolutely of no use to her!"

"I suppose she bowed herself to the wisdom of Providence. Did she sing psalms all the time?"

"She had no chance," said Trelawny, turning it off with a laugh. "She had her hands full with the cooking."

"And what did you do?"

"I had to hunt for food. Also, I built a log-hut!"

"Did you? Why, it grows more and more exciting. Mother, do you hear? Miles has really built a log-hut and lived in it. Oh, Miles, do show me how! Let us build a log-hut in the garden this summer, and camp out!"

"You had better ask Lord Thanet to join you. That sort of wild Indian business is just in his line," said Mr. Carrington, laughing. "We've got a neighbour at the Priory at last, Miles."

"No! Has Mr. Penrhyn let it? I believe I bet Edna a pair of gloves he never would."

"Three pairs!" corrected Edna. "I have hardly bought any since it was let. Lord Thanet took it last October."

"He must be a curiosity! The house is tumbling down, and full of rats and bats and vermin."

"He is rather eccentric. He is a great man of science, and runs about with a butterfly net, catching things and classifying them. The bats are a joy to him—he has found a new species not known to exist in Great Britain."

"By Jove!" said Trelawny blankly. "He must be an original neighbour."

"He is really an awfully nice fellow—very simple for all his honours. He is the youngest scientist who has ever been made a peer, isn't he, Edna? And I don't know how many letters there are after his name."

"I have given up counting them," said Edna gaily. "He came up the Nile with us, Miles, and when the news came about you we left him up there, sitting disconsolately on a donkey with his long legs curled under the creature somehow. I expect he is there now!"

"Poor chap!" said Trelawny vaguely. He was grateful to the scientist for appearing in the conversation, since it spared him further descriptions of Leslie. It did not seem the right moment to speak of her, and he shrank from the subject. Another day, when the first volley of questions and answers were over, when he could get Edna alone and things had settled down a bit, he would go straight to the root of the matter. Edna was very kind to him—unusually kind and merry and affectionate, as if she wanted to make up for all he had gone through, and their separation. He felt her sympathy and understanding through all the light talk, and was grateful for it, without looking for more subtle causes. But his head was really getting so confoundedly bad that he felt he should be glad to get home and lie down, and after a cup of tea he excused himself from staying to dinner and ordered the cart to drive him back.

"I'll come over to morrow and have a real talk with you, Ed," he said, during a moment's seriousness, when they were saying good-bye in the porch. "There are lots of things I want to talk to you about—by ourselves, y'know'."

"Yes, do," said Edna cordially. "Father and mother will be out to-morrow afternoon. They are going to inspect the Priory, and see if anything can be done to make it look more habitable for the time being. Lord Thanet is coming home."

"Are you all acting as caretakers for him?" said

Trelawny, with a tired smile. "He seems fairly helpless. People are jolly neighbourly about here, aren't they? I like that."

"Oh, we all run in and out of each other's houses as of old. You will like Lord Thanet, Miles, and you will have something in common, for he has been in those parts you have just come from. I believe he was shipwrecked there himself last year—but he was not so lucky as to find a desert island!"

"By Jove! was he? We must have a talk," said Trelawny. "Shipwrecks are becoming very common though, Edna—they will soon be unfashionable at this rate! To be lost in an aeroplane is the correct thing now, isn't it?"

"Or a study of fortifications that ends in a foreign prison!" said Edna, laughing. "Good-bye, Miles. Take care of that cold. There's an east wind."

Trelawny swung himself into the cart and drove away leaving her standing there in the porch with the comfortable, English country house as a background. It was a very domestic picture, and intensely civilized. Edna suited it as she stood with her hand shading her eyes, looking after the cart. There was about her a certain clearness of mental vision as well as physical, and she was long-sighted. She went back into the house, and found her mother knitting placidly in the drawing-room.

"I am afraid Miles is going to be ill!" she said in a direct fashion of her own. "I wish he would have gone home in the brougham instead of that open cart."

"My dear Edna, I hope not!"—Mrs. Carrington nearly dropped a stitch. "I thought him looking particularly well."

"He is very brown," said Edna critically. "But that is, naturally, sunburn. And he has not an ounce of spare flesh about him, which is the result of healthy hard work, I suppose. But his eyes are queer, and he looks to me if as if he were sickening for something."

Miles was sickening for influenza. A message came over the next day to say that he was sorry he could not

keep his appointment in the afternoon, but his temperature was 101. It was not a very bad attack, and he had splendid arrears of health behind him to pull him through. It would not have kept him in bed more than a week if he would have been patient but he got up too soon when he felt a little better, and the result was a fresh chill, a relapse, and pneumonia. For six weeks Major Miles Trelawny was laid up again, with doctors and nurses in attendance, and at one point in the illness his condition was considered serious, though his sound constitution and splendid vitality left the doctors in no great fear of his ultimate recovery once they could turn the corner.

He had more nurses than the professional ones, for both his sisters stayed in the house part of the time, and Edna came over almost daily to see him when she was allowed, while his father was as devoted as any of the women. But despite their familiar, pleasant presences, he was restless and dissatisfied, and longed, with the unreasonable longing of the sick, for a touch and voice that were far less trained and reliable—for the little girl who had nursed him on the Island, when he had twisted his ankle and bruised his throat with the giant creeper. Leslie Mackelt had nursed by instinct, not by rule, and had soothed and stimulated him as much by her personality and the new interest he had taken in her, perhaps, as by her ministrations. But he turned like a fretful child to the memory of her willing hands and patient voice, and the coaxing and petting she had lavished on him just for the time that he was helpless. She had been fiery enough when he was about again—exacting in her turn, ready to retort, by no means indulgent to his whims. But he wanted even the sting of her presence, and the provocation she brought him—anything but this deadly monotony of beef-tea and level kindness! The women round him were so cheerful, so rational, so logically well-balanced! He found himself naturally seeing their point of view as similar to his own, until he longed to be contradicted. He had told Leslie once that Edna Carrington was far more suited to him than she was, more sensible and level-headed and normal

minded. He began to see that that was just why she was not suited to him, being cast in the same mould as himself. He wanted the sharp contrast even of Leslie's most tiresome moods—a thing of fire and spirit rather than solid material character. He and Leslie balanced each other, however fiercely they might disagree. And, oh ! beyond all reasoning and arguments for choice, he loved her and longed for her, as man has for woman from time immemorial. Lying there on his sick-bed, with the fever chasing pictures through his brain, he saw her from their first consciousness of each other on the shore, to his last sight of her falling into the arms of the Mother Superior—Leslie as a boyish figure with pale, unhealthy face and narrow chest ; Leslie hardening under the work he put upon her, rebellious, resentful, but always advancing in health and strength ; Leslie suddenly opening into womanhood like a bud in the sunshine opening to blossom ; Leslie at last caught with the fire of his passion, and blending her very soul with his—and he caught his own breath at the memory and quivered again with the long-dead glow and sweetness. In the first shock of returning to conventional boundaries he had been thankful that they were still man and maid, and that he had not despoiled her of her girlhood. Now the old elementary instincts of his virility arose in him again, stripped of acquired theories, and he wished savagely that he had used violence—that he had played the ruffian to her for a minute to bind her to him for evermore—a cruel kindness, that at least might have hindered her slipping out of his life like this. For where was she ? What least clue had he for recovering her ? Nothing but the fact of her people living in Scotland, and herself being the heiress to the Mackelt millions. She had never been very communicative about her own life, lest the details should bore him, and he could not recollect her having mentioned a single town where she had lived, save Edgbaston, and with that she dropped all connection when her aunt died. Her family's locality in Scotland he was sure he had never heard. The money that made the name of Mackelt of interest to the public, and the

Convent of the Seven Sorrows which he could find through any Roman Catholic community, were all that he had by which to trace her.

It was the Mackelt millions which had been one factor in deterring Trelawny from pursuing his intentions at once with regard to the girl. He belonged to a type of man who intensely dislikes the obligation of marrying an heiress. He would, of the two, infinitely have preferred his wife to be dependent upon him, and though he had accepted the idea of Edna's moderate fortune with the engagement to her, the enormous wealth forced upon him with Leslie Mackelt was a very different matter. People would say that he had taken advantage of the girl's helplessness, stranded with him on the Island, to induce her to marry him—particularly in the light of the broken engagement that must come first. It was a small thing compared to the necessity of a man for his natural mate, were it weighed in such a huge balance, but it loomed large from a sick-bed. He tossed and turned and fumed over his misfortunes and the sorry tricks that Fate was playing him, and retarded his own recovery thereby. Not the least of his troubles was that he could tell nobody until he had confided in Edna. His sisters could not think why Miles, usually so even-tempered and reasonable, should be such an impossible patient; but they attributed it to the comfortable theory that "all men were bad invalids," and bore with him with a good-nature that he found maddening. All that his enforced inactivity taught him was that as soon as he could stand on his feet again, shaping his own life by his own will, he must find the girl he had allowed to escape him, and hold her with strong hands to the day of his death.

It was May when Trelawny was taken ill; it was the end of June before he was about again, and able to tackle the first part of his task. The roses were out at High Trelawny, and nodded and swung round the smoking-room window when Edna came over for a private talk with him. He had asked her to come, excusing his remissness in not going to her by the fact of

his convalescence, and also that they were less likely to be interrupted in the practically bachelor house where his father and he were living together. The married sisters had gone home to their respective husbands, and Miles was promoted to doing without a nurse. Edna responded to his appeal as frankly as was natural to her. She rode over one sunny morning on her bay mare, left her at the stables, and was sitting in Sir Charles' own chair when Miles entered the smoking-room, a little less brown than he had been six weeks ago, but very much his own self.

They shook hands in silence, and then by a simultaneous impulse they both spoke at once, and in the same words :

“ I have a confession to make ! ”

Then they both stopped and laughed, for they had the same sense of humour.

“ Ladies first ! ” said Trelawny.

Edna sat down on the arm of the chair from which she had risen, and he took up a position opposite to her on the solid oak table, one foot dangling, and the other resting on the floor, for he was a tall man. Their eyes were so nearly on a level that they looked straight in each other's faces.

“ I ought to have told you before, Miles—when you first came home—only I was not sure—and then you got ill,” Edna began bravely. She never moved her clear, wholesome eyes from his, but she went on more slowly, “ I want to break our engagement ! ”

His first thought naturally was that she had guessed his intention, and simply forestalled him to make it easier. It was generously like Edna, but her next words contradicted the impression.

“ Wait a minute—let me get it all out, and have done with it. Last autumn, as we told you, the Priory was let—to Lord Thanet—and I got to know him very well. But there was nothing but friendship between us until we heard of your being drowned from the *Aristo*—I knew I liked him very much and he liked me, but he was so different to every one else, I never seemed able to fit him into my life as a man a woman might marry.”

(The vision of the elderly scientist that former references to him conjured up rendered Trelawny dumb. It was the incongruity of this Lord Thanet and his butterfly net and Edna in her habit that took his breath away, as much as the unexpectedness of her confession.) "Then we went to Egypt," the girl went on, "and he joined us, and I began to like him all over again—in a new way—only just then we got your father's cable, and we had to come home, and I didn't know if I were standing on my head or my heels! He had never said anything that I could be sure of—you know—"

Trelawny's kind, friendly eyes were still meeting her own. He was trying to keep the amazement out of them, and to be simply sympathetic. It would be his turn for the difficulties of explanation presently!

"I told you he was coming home—that day you lunched with us—as we were saying good-bye. I didn't know what to say—whether I ought to tell you anything—but you had been through a lot—and he had never told me. . . . But since you have been ill he has come back, and I fought it all out with myself, and I decided that when you got well I would ask you to let me go!"

"And Thanet?" said Trelawny gently. "Has he—"

"Yes!" she said, and flung up her head defiantly with a quick blush—love's flag of defence for the absent. "We didn't mean to—either of us—but we had a misunderstanding and in the heat of the moment it slipped out! I know it sounds dishonourable while you were lying here ill—but I can't explain—things happen so quickly—"

She broke down and turned her face away with unusual consciousness. Trelawny felt more than ever in a dream. Edna shy—and for an elderly scientist! Edna struggling for words to express a situation that he could understand only too easily, did she but know! Before he answered in words he took her left hand gently in his own, and drawing the engagement ring from her finger slipped it into his pocket. Then he kissed her.

"I shall give it back to you, you know, as a wedding-present, when you are married to Thanet. You chose the stones and the design, and I shouldn't like anybody else to have it. And now, for my own confession."—He sat up and squared himself a little, for he was conscious that it would sound much worse than hers, though it led to the same end. "I was waiting too, to lay my own case before you, and though you've cut the knot for us both I should feel a skunk if I didn't tell you the truth."

She looked up quickly with her far-seeing eyes, before he could speak.

"Miles, you've fallen in love!—with somebody you cared for more than me?"

"Yes—I'm afraid so," he said soberly.

"Who is it?" She was a little curious, but not piqued. Her life was too full of the new feeling to leave any room for the meanness of jealousy.

"That girl who was with me on the Island. Oh, I know it sounds like propinquity—but it wasn't that. It was something more, or it wouldn't have lasted. I want her more now than I did then—and Heaven knows that was bad enough!" he added with a long soft breath that made Edna look at him much as he had looked at her—as at a new man, whom she had never known.

"Did you tell her so?" she said simply.

"Did I not!—Yes, I know I was wrong, but we never thought we should get off that place again, you know—and there was all our lives to live out—"

He stopped rather helplessly, conscious that he was trying to justify a plea which he could not actually state to Edna. The situation that had seemed "inevitable" on a desert island was one that could not be mentioned in his own house in England to the carefully guarded girl with whom he was on such frank terms—with just such reservation. He could not even tell if she had vaguely guessed what he half hinted, by her next words.

"What did she say?"

"She said, even under these circumstances, that I

must not break my word. But things got to such a pass at last that I broke down the barriers between us—I made her promise to marry me if we ever got home, and I could lay the case straight before you. She hadn't a chance, you see—not really—a woman doesn't hold out for ever if she cares for a fellow!"

There was the darker truth here again—the truth that might have been. But Edna took the surface meaning.

"Did you make love to her?"

"Yes," he said briefly.

"Well, go on. What happened! Where is she now?"

"I don't know." The words struck him as ridiculous, coming after his last acknowledgment. "When we were taken off at last by that ship there was a party of Nuns on board, and they took care of her. The Mother Superior was an extraordinary woman—a 'personage,' a great lady, whatever she had happened to be—you know what I mean. She impressed me awfully, even in the few words I had with her."

Edna had all the English girl's educated distrust of Rome when she has been brought up in the Protestant atmosphere of a Protestant neighbourhood, and comes of a Protestant family with Protestant traditions. Her straight brows contracted as though she met a mental Bogey, and in spite of her common-sense she spoke out of prejudice.

"Wasn't it rather rash to leave her in their care? These people get such an extraordinary influence!"

"Well, it would be a very good influence, anyway!" said Trelawny, rather amused. "I thought it the best thing that could have happened at the time. But I must say they rather exceeded my expectations. When we got into San Francisco she went off with them early in the morning, without a word of warning. She had been seedy on the boat—something like I have been—and I had not seen her since we went on board."

"You mean to say she walked off with the Nuns, and never said good-bye?"

"She left me a note, going back to all her original arguments—that it was wrong to go back on my word, and I was to return to England and marry you, and to forget her, etc. Just the sort of thing a girl with a morbid conscience would write, without much thought for the man."

"Or for the other woman!" Edna flushed a little. "How nice for me when I found out—as I was bound to do sooner or later!"

"Leslie is not very far-seeing. She rushes at what she thinks her duty like a little bull in a china shop, and the result is chaos, for her as well as for other people, poor little soul!" He smiled and sighed together, and the girl watching him softened. She caught a mental picture of a nature very different to either Miles's or her own.

"But tell me," she said earnestly, leaning forward with her riding-whip bent between her strong young hands in her excitement, "what has become of her since then?"

"I tell you I don't know. I have never had a line from her. I suppose she went to Scotland to her own people. The Nuns brought her over to England, I expect."

"But my dear Miles, it is two months and more since you returned yourself! Do you mean to tell me that you have had no communication with this girl since you left that Island? Haven't you made any inquiries? tried to find her? written to her?" Her words came more quickly in a gathering indignation that took Miles Trelawny utterly by surprise. He had looked at the matter quite rationally, from a man's point of view. Edna flashed round to the woman's.

"You made love to her—you asked her to marry you if I would release you (a foregone conclusion)—you seem to have done every conceivable thing you could to make her care for you, in spite of which it was *she* who held out against you, *she* who reminded you of your honour, *she* who tried to creep out of your life again and leave you free! And after all this you practically

dropped the matter and let her go. My dear Miles, what do you suppose she thinks of you?"

"Well, what on earth was I to do?" said Trelawny hotly. "I couldn't lay the matter before you while you were still abroad, nor the minute you came back, and I've been laid up ever since. Where was I in the wrong?"

"I don't know—but I know if I were a man I would have done *something*. And I should be horribly afraid now lest I had lost her. I hope those Nuns have not made her a Roman Catholic and induced her to take the veil!"

But Trelawny laughed at the idea. "Leslie was a strict Methodist—you ought to have heard her views! They would have had more chance of converting a Jew or a Buddhist!"

"You don't know. You say yourself what an extraordinary woman the Mother Superior was, even from the little you saw of her. I think you've waited quite long enough, Miles. I should put the matter into the hands of Scotland Yard—advertise—find out where that Convent is, and force the Nuns to tell you what they did with the girl. But you ought to do something."

Trelawny looked at her with a little reluctant admiration. She was so full of vital energy and self-reliance that she made him feel invertebrate. He *had* hesitated; he acknowledged it in his heart. Circumstances had seemed to necessitate it, but he knew that if he had been really keen on not losing sight of Leslie Mackelt that he would have managed things better.

"I don't quite understand you," said Edna honestly, lifting her blue eyes to his moody face. "So many things seem to weigh with men—there is only one vital issue to women. Do you suppose if Gideon Ivermay had been on a desert island with me that I should have calmly let him drift out of my life while I considered as to how best to express my feelings to you?"

Trelawny suddenly put his hand up to his head as if bewildered. "I beg your pardon," he said. "Who?"

"Lord Thanet. I told you I cared for him not half an hour ago!"—Edna was reproachful.

"But *who* did you say?"

"I said Lord Thanet."

"No, you didn't. You said—"

"Oh, I said Gideon Ivermay—he was Sir Gideon before they made him Lord Thanet."

Trelawny drew a long breath. "It seems I was bound to stand in his shoes!" he said grimly. "I believe I am in debt to him for the loan of his clothes and personal effects, Edna! Did you tell me he was wrecked in those latitudes? Well, we must have found the schooner—the *Golden Gate*—for his belongings were about the only ones uninjured on the ship, and we made excellent use of them."

"He had been travelling all round the world, studying geo-morphology, and geology, and all the other ologies," said Edna breathlessly. "It is quite possible."

"It is quite certain. His name was in some of the books which Leslie took, and his initials on the clothes which *I* took!"

"I will bring him over to tea, and you shall talk to him yourself," said Edna with prompt determination. "He has been grieving over the loss of his collection on that voyage. You see, he was not travelling for any learned Society—he was on a holiday, and so he was collecting for a little museum of his own. He saved so little! I believe there were several varieties of conglomerate rock (whatever that awful thing is!) and the larvæ of beetles. You didn't see anything like old stones and chrysalises, did you, Miles?"

"I expect they were amongst the things I left behind in the cabin," said Trelawny guiltily. "But I have several pairs of his flannel trousers by me, if you think they would be any consolation?"

"I think the books are dearer. Did you bring them away? They were relics of his college days. Perhaps we can recover his books, anyway."

"Ah, but there again we want Leslie Mackelt," said Trelawny. "She has his books, for I am pretty sure she would not part with them."

The identity of Lord Thanet with the Gideon Ivermay of the *Golden Gate* rather alleviated any awkwardness in the meeting of the two men. It is difficult to be restrained with a fellow mortal when you have borrowed his boots and worn his trousers! Moreover, "G.I." was such an extraordinary revelation that Trelawny could not approach him on the level of the everyday man. His personal appearance alone was disarming. Miles had known that he was a tall man from the cut of his clothes, but he was unprepared for the endless length of body that seemed to be presented to him when Edna introduced them. Lord Thanet was possibly fifty, but actual years were not a thing that most people attributed to him. He had a great quantity of loose white hair, really white, not grey, and extremely thick—which threatened to fall over his excellent forehead and into his quizzical eyes, and his whole clean-shaven face was distinctly humorous. He gave Trelawny the feeling of a reserve of strength for all his very gentle manner; yet when he pushed the white locks out of his eyes with the back of his hand, which he had a way of doing, he was almost childlike.

"I have been most impatient to meet you," he said calmly to Trelawny. "When you have been hating the existence of a man *hard* for six months, it is really quite a relief to see him in the flesh!"

Trelawny found himself obliged to laugh. "Something material to tilt against, eh?" he said. "It is rather curious that we have known each other's names for so long!"

"It seems fitting that you should sit on a barren shore and curse me for the state of my wardrobe, while I sat on a donkey in Upper Egypt and cursed you for needing clothes or anything else that proved you alive!"

"I could have done with a few more shirt-studs," said Trelawny jokingly. "Otherwise I was truly grateful."

"I don't know how it is," Lord Thanet admitted plaintively, "but they always get mixed up with the specimens. I had some calcareous mud that was really

peculiar in those parts, composed of coccoliths and tunicate spicules, with some calcium carbonate. If you had not so ruthlessly thrown my coccoliths away, you would probably have picked up one or two fairly whole studs."

"A task for Edna in the future, to keep them sorted," said Trelawny good-humouredly. "I'm awfully sorry I did not keep your loot. To tell the truth"—he laughed shamefacedly—"we thought some of it was stuff you had put amongst your clothes to keep out moth!"

Lord Thanet threw up his white head and shouted with laughter. He certainly had a boy's laugh and a most charming personality. Moreover, it was impossible to feel jealous of him. He gave Trelawny an easy, rambling account of his journey about Melanesia and Polynesia, and described the natives with a rich sense of humour. When the crew of the *Golden Gate* took to the boats he had saved nothing, except his notebooks. All his data, he said, he had managed to take with him (which explained the fact that Trelawny and Leslie had searched in vain for any diary anent the voyage), but he was evidently grieved about his precious collections.

"It would be almost worth while to charter a ship and go out to your Island to board the old *Golden Gate* and recover my specimens," he said thoughtfully. "What do you say, Edna? Shall we have an official honeymoon there, for the unofficial one that was forced on Trelawny?"

"There's the log-hut, anyway!" said Edna gaily. "But we should want a pilot."

Trelawny turned rather abruptly away from them. A sudden vision of the warm white sand, the caves, the little hut, and the dark woods behind, swam before him in a mist of pain. The idea of some one else in such surroundings was revealed a sacrilege.

"I am afraid the schooner will break her back in the next storm, and go all to pieces," he said, carelessly. "We left very little aboard her worth the saving."

"Except Gideon's bits of rock and half-dead insects!"

said Edna derisively. "Oh, Miles, do assure him that his precious books are safe, and he may get them back some day!"

"But I have got them back!" said the scientist slowly, and his mobile face grew suddenly graver as he caught the expression on theirs. "It was a remarkable thing, and I have not had time to tell you, Edna. You know I went to Oxford for two days last week (I am a Fellow of Balliol," he explained to Miles, "and have my quarters there—till I marry," with a smile at Edna). "Well, I found a parcel had been sent there some weeks ago, and when I opened it it proved to be all my old books that I had with me aboard——" He stopped because of Trelawny's breathless lips and hungry eyes turned to him suddenly. It was Edna who spoke, hurriedly.

"Did she write? Did you find out where they came from?"

"No, there wasn't a single line. The books were very carefully packed and the parcel was registered. I looked to see if I could find out where on earth they had come from, as it was like a resurrection. But the postmark was Kendal, and I knew no one there. I naturally thought, when Edna told me about your finding the *Golden Gate*," he added, turning to Trelawny, "that you had sent them."

"No, not I," said Trelawny with dry lips, and a difficulty in speaking that made him dully surprised at himself. "It must have been Miss Mackelt. I am surprised that she parted with them, somehow. But I suppose she thought they were not hers to keep—that would be reason enough for her."

"But how did she find out that Gideon was Lord Thanet, as you did not know, Miles?" exclaimed Edna. "And the address at Oxford, too!"

"They were quite correctly addressed," said Lord Thanet. He was still watching Trelawny's face with his gentle, intent eyes. "I examined the wrappings carefully, because I should have liked to write and thank the sender, and have asked her—him, as I sup-

posed—how he came into possession of them. They had been faithful friends—I took them all round the world. Most of them were bought in my college days, when I was a *very* young man! But I can still read Swinburne and Omar and old Browning after a hard day's work. They are like undeserved desserts after a plain, wholesome dinner!"

"Kendal!" said Edna, knitting her straight brows. "At least we have the name of a place to go on at last. Miles, do let's do something, even if it is only to put a detective on the track, and represent Miss Mackelt as a repentant criminal who has returned Gideon's worthless books after months of wanton theft!"

Trelawny did not laugh this time. He felt so desperately inclined to try some such medium as a forlorn chance of finding Leslie. What he was going to do he did not quite know, for to take the long journey up to the north merely to ask the postal authorities if they remembered who registered a parcel to Oxford weeks ago was obviously a wild-goose chase. And the pursuit and chase of one of the biggest heiresses in Great Britain was hardly a matter in which to ask help of the police. He was beginning to have a dim suspicion too that he was not likely to get any information from the Convent of the Seven Sorrows even when he located it. With an idea of doing that vague "something," however, that Edna urged on him, he went again to London, and in the natural course of things called at the War Office. He was bound to rejoin his own regiment, which was at Colchester, in another week's time, and had not much leisure at his disposal now in which to pursue the matter personally. But there was a letter awaiting him at the War Office—it had been there for some weeks—a thick, closely-written letter that made him catch his breath, though he had only seen the handwriting once before, in the brief missive given to him when he left the *Enterprise*. Leslie Mackelt had written to him at last. The riddle had solved itself.

He drove to his club, being the quietest place he could think of in London, and in a deserted corner of the card-

room he sat down to read the desperate, hopeless pages. It was all written in short sentences, as if she could not wait for a turn of phrase such as had amused and irritated him in her former letter. No, this was not a morbid-minded girl trying to "do right," and talking stiffly about smirching a man's honour the while she sobbed in self-pity over her love as over a broken toy. Trelawny had read something between the lines that time, if not all. There was no occasion this time. The whole bitter truth was there. This was outcry, and a woman had written it.

CHAPTER XVII

" For us and love
Failure; but when God fails, despair."

ROBERT BROWNING.

" **M**Y DEAR MILES,
" I like to call you so just this once. It is a relief to write it. It would be a relief to say it to you—' my dear Miles.' But I never shall again. This is the last time I shall write to you or speak to you. It seems almost like speaking to you. And I am going to tell you all the truth, because it is the last time. I don't know if you will ever get this letter. If you do not it does not matter, even though somebody else reads it. I shall be just as much out of the world as if I were dead. And when you are dead it does not matter to you what happens in the world.

" I want to tell you first that I have become a Roman Catholic. It is the one thing that has deadened the pain. It comforts me. I am sure it is the real religion. It is all so beautiful. And they forgive you everything. I wanted to be a Catholic almost at once, but they would not let me. They said I must be really convinced. But when we got to England I was put under instruction, and now I am a member of the Church.

" There is only one thing that troubles me, in spite of religion. I can't be sorry that I love you. I can't! I can't! I loved you all in the wrong way, from the first. When I told Mother Ursula she showed me that. I thought I could learn to love you in her way. But I can't! I can't. I never knew anyone like Mother Ursula. She is so good and so wonderful. I feel her so much that I can't even write about her. I should like to be like her in all ways. I want to be always with

her now. When I am away from her it all comes back to me, and I am mad again. I know I am wicked, but I want you and nothing else. Every bit of me seems to ache for you, and my heart and my brain are like fire. If I could see you just once more I think it wouldn't hurt me so. But I know you won't come now. You have gone back to that other girl, and you have forgotten me. It is quite right. I knew it must happen. But I am so unhappy that I think it makes me more wicked. I don't want to think of you with her. I don't want to think that you are touching her as you did me, and speaking to her as you did to me. If I think of it it makes me want to drag you away, wrong or right.

"I am going with Mother Ursula and the Nuns out to Polynesia again. They are going to establish a leper station. I must tell you quickly, for it is too horrible. Most of them have already undergone hospital training. They are giving up the rest of their lives to their mission, and I am going too. I can't leave Mother Ursula, and I feel that I ought to go and give myself to God also. But I am so frightened! I wake in the night sometimes and see dreadful things that I shall have to see in reality. I can't bear it. But I am going. They will not let me join the Order at once. Mother Ursula says I must not even be a probationer in a hurry. I am going out as a lay Sister or helper. They have got leave to take our Island from the Government. And I have given them the money that they want. When I first thought of the Island for *that* I felt I could not let them go there. I cried and stormed. I was mad again. They said it was hysteria, and Mother Ursula just sat and looked at me. I knew I was wrong then. Everything in me seemed to give way at once, and I said I would help them with money, if they could take me with them. It has been settled very quickly. Mother Ursula has so many friends and relations connected with the Government. After all, what does it matter? I have lost you, and I only loved the Island because of you.

"I hope I shall catch the disease and die very quickly. You always take it after a time. The Nuns all know

that they are going to die. But it is so loathsome! I am deadly sick when I think of it. I am afraid. And to grow like that on our Island, in the silence, and the sweetness, and the longing—and then to die. But I don't mind dying. It is the only thing that makes me feel that I can go through with it.

" You may have heard that Donald was drowned from the *Aristo*. When I got home I found that my other brother, Robert, was dead too. He had appendicitis. So I was all alone, and there was no one to stop me doing what I thought was right. The solicitors were very angry, and some cousins I have never seen before. But I don't care. I wanted to give Mother Ursula the money. No one has ever been to me what she is. The only thing I would do to please myself was to leave half the fortune to you. I made my will, and they can't alter it. When I am dead, you must claim it. But I may live a long time—years. That is the dreadful part. Mother Ursula says it is God's service, and we must pray to be spared to tend the sick. Think of it! *Those* sick people. I can't pray for that. It chokes me. I hope I shall die soon.

" Miles! Miles! I want to hear your voice again, and to creep into your arms. But there is no room for me. Another woman has taken my place. Was it my place, ever? You said so often that it was. And I believed you—until that last night. I never meant to tell you, but I will now, because it is just as if I were dead. I came to you in your hut. I stood beside you for quite a long time. But you were asleep. You did not want me, after all. I meant to give you everything you asked for. I wanted to give, and give, and give, until I was beggared. But it was too late then. Mother Ursula says that I was spared a great sin. I ought to thank God that by His direct care I was saved. But I can't! I can't! I am not grateful to God in my heart, though my lips thank Him. I know I want you still as I wanted you then.

" You used to laugh at me for reading poetry—except 'Sweet and Low.' Do you remember? But I

found something in Swinburne that haunts me. It came back to me that last night, and ever since :

“ Couldst thou not watch with me one hour ? Behold,
Dawn skims the sea with flying feet of gold,
With sudden feet that graze the gradual sea ;
Couldst thou not watch with me ?

“ What, not one hour ? for star by star the night
Falls, and her thousands world by world take flight !
They die, the day survives, and what of thee ?
Couldst thou not watch with me ?

“ O dust and ashes, once thought sweet to smell !
With me it is not, is it with thee well ?
O sea-drift blown from windward back to sea !
Couldst thou not watch with me ?

“ As a new moon above spent stars thou wast ;
But stars endure after the moon is past.
Couldst thou not watch one hour, tho' I watch three ?
Couldst thou not watch with me ?

“ Since thou art not as these are, go thy ways ;
Thou hast no part in all my nights and days.
Lie still, sleep on, be glad—as such things be ;
Thou couldst not watch with me.

I read it till I knew it by heart. But I have not got the books now. Mother Ursula knew who Gideon Ivermay was, and that I could send them to him at Balliol College. He is Lord Thanet, and he was not lost at sea as we thought. We saw his name in the papers just lately. So I sent back the books. It was one more renunciation. I had come to love them so much that I dared not keep them. The Mother asked me to question myself as to what good they were doing me. Then I knew they must go. But I felt as if it were the last link with you, somehow. And I always seem to care for the wrong things, and then it hurts me so to give them up. The true life is sacrifice, I know. But I am so far from the saints.

“ If you came now, this minute, and held out your arms to me, I should let you take me away and do anything you pleased with me. I know this quite well. So I am still wicked. But once I have left England I know quite as well that I shall never come back. Though

you implored me, I should not come to you. I feel as if a door would shut between us once I have gone. And I shall be dead and deaf to you, even though I have not yet joined the Order or taken the disease I go to nurse. Don't call to me then—it will be no use. It will be my turn to sleep, and yours to waste vigil. Only in this last hour I am still alive, and longing for you. And it is torment—the death agony—

"I am writing this at midnight, alone in my room. Nobody knows that I am awake or that I am writing to you. If they did they might persuade me not. And I must write. Oh, my dear—my darling—whatever happens to me I will pray God always to bless you and make you happy. And perhaps if I give my life up to Him, and His service, He will be merciful, and listen to me. I can never do anything for you again, except this. And you wouldn't care for it if I could. But I shall love you still. I must love you all my dreadful life, and when I die, and in Purgatory. But beyond that they say there is peace. Perhaps heaven simply means that we shall never love anybody any more. For love is pain.

"LESLIE MACKELT."

Trelawny read carefully. Once or twice he moistened his lips, and at the end of the pages he coughed a queer little short cough before he turned back to the head of the letter to look for the address. But there was no address, only the postmark Kendal on the envelope. The date was three weeks old.

He put the letter into his pocket, and looked at the clock. There was just time to catch the afternoon train and reach Trelawny before midnight. They did not expect him, for he had been staying at his Club, but he wired that he was coming. He did not consult either the police or his lawyers, though they might have advised him as to the best method of finding out whether the Nuns of the Seven Sorrows had actually left England on their pilgrimage to southern seas. He did better. He went home to talk it over with his father.

Sir Charles and Miles sat up into the small hours that night in the smoking-room (where only a few days since Edna had warned him that he had waited long enough), with Leslie's letter between them. The older man had listened in silence to the brief statement of the whole affair that his son had given him ; but for all its brevity it was the plain truth that he had been unable to tell Edna.

" We are both men," said Sir Charles at the close ; " I might have done as you did under the same circumstances. God forbid that I should judge you, my boy ! But I think a decent fellow would feel rather a scoundrel for the way he had treated that girl—eh, Miles ? "

Trelawny was silent for a moment, as if seeking rather helplessly for words to express elementary emotions. The smoking-room, with its solid, masculine furniture, became a tangible weight upon his utterance. The very window-curtains seemed to stifle his free breath and to shut out nature.

" I loved—her, sir ! " he said baldly. " I'm afraid I can't explain. There was nothing but ourselves in the Universe. We were man and woman. There simply *weren't* any churches or laws or social barriers. Even if we were rescued these things seemed trivial—just something that might be dealt with later, after the essential thing was an established fact."

" It comes to this, after all, that you tried to seduce her ! "

" I tried to make her my wife ! " said Trelawny, simply, and it was as if the son of Adam spoke at last from an older world.

Sir Charles opened his lips to reply—and closed them again. He had met the younger man's eyes, and he was puzzled. He returned to the letter.

" It seems to me that one thing at least is clear—you've got to reclaim your woman, if you care for her in this primeval fashion ! She is yours, in spite of a hundred Nuns with missions stronger than the Mother Superior's. The only flaw in your position is that you

have not claimed her before. Miles, you *have* let things drift!"

"Ah, there you put your finger on the weak spot at once," acknowledged Trelawny rather drearily. "It was just the civilization that came between us. Obligations, duties of time and place, considerations of all sorts that beset a man in his prescribed world. I ought to have clung to the real thing, and the others would have fallen in behind it—taken their proper places all right. Now—is it too late?"

"She gives no clue as to *when* they sail. She simply says she is going with them. Stay—I *do* remember. It's only a small paragraph—in some Church paper, I think, that Anna was reading while she was here. It never struck me. They must have kept it out of the general Press."

Sir Charles turned hurriedly to a pile of illustrated weeklies and other papers left on a side table, for they were not very tidy at Trelawny, old periodicals often lying about for a month. He found what he was seeking, a semi-religious paper, not an actual organ of the Anglican Church, but one that interested Anna, whose husband was a clergyman. Sir Charles turned the rustling pages while Miles sat waiting, he hardly knew for what, his eyes following half reluctantly a sheet of Leslie's letter that lay open before him.

"I may live a long time—years. That is the dreadful part. Mother Ursula says it is God's service, and we must pray to be spared to tend the sick. Think of it! *Those* sick people! I can't pray for that. It chokes me . . ."

"There!" said Sir Charles, handing him the paper.

It was only a short account of the heroism of a certain Order of Nuns, the Sisters of the Seven Sorrows, some of whom, with their Mother Superior, were going to devote their lives to tending and nursing sufferers from the horrible scourge of leprosy. The Government had granted them the lease of an uninhabited Island in Polynesia, to be called the Island of Notre Dame de Sept Douleurs—colloquially, *Notre Dame*—and the

community would sail at once by the *Thesita* of the Lang & Croft line for Montreal, cross Canada, and sail again from Vancouver for Tangaroon, a quarantine station already given up to leprosy, near the Ladrone Group. Here the Sisters would begin their mission by volunteering for work in the hospital as practical training among the diseased, and from this already scourge-infected island they would take stores and building materials and such workmen as the leprous could furnish, to Notre Dame, to start building and provisioning. It was a noble work, and a latter-day martyrdom unaccompanied by applause or recompense. The funds necessary for the carrying out of the work were being furnished by the inheritor of the Mackelt millions.

The paragraph said nothing about the girl herself going with the Sisters. The name of the ship by which they sailed and the shipping firm was the only clue. But that at least was something. Trelawny telegraphed to Messrs. Lang & Croft next day, and had his fears confirmed that the *Thesita* had sailed three weeks since. Then he went to Liverpool and bombarded the steamship office for further information. The clerk in the passenger department happened to remember a good deal about the matter, for he had been the means of supplying the Mother Superior with certain details of the connection at Vancouver. Her personality had impressed him inevitably, as it did every one with whom she came in contact. He referred to passenger lists and bygone entries, and found the names of the whole party—twelve in all—and the name of the last was Leslie Mackelt. Trelawny's heart went down with a sudden throb at the intimation. He had not realized until then how much he had built upon the fact that she was not mentioned as accompanying the Nuns in the Church paper—how much he had clung to the hope that she was still in England. He asked, in a voice whose hopelessness struck himself, when the boat would reach Montreal, and, allowing a week on the Canadian Pacific Railway, the name of the other that would take them on to Tangaroon. The clerk knew that also—he

had made the inquiries. It was the *Sarawak*, a sailing ship ; but the date of her departure from Vancouver he could not say. He had warned the Mother Superior that she might very likely have to wait at the latter port.

There was only one thing to do now, to cable to Leslie and implore her not to go on, but to wait at Vancouver until he could write to her. He sent the message with the reply paid, and another to the agent to inform him if the ship had sailed, regardless of any cost ; and then there was nothing for him to do but wait, with his hands tied, in England, for that forlorn hope on the other side of the world ; and all the while the ominous words of Leslie's letter beat time to an equal premonition in his own soul : "Once I have left England I know quite as well that I shall never come back. Though you implored me, I should not come to you. I feel as if a door would shut between us, once I am gone. . . . Don't call on me then—it will be no use. *It will be my turn to sleep, and yours to waste vigil.* . . ."

He could not bear the look of the docks and the shipping, or the busy people, all so intent on their own affairs, their own lives, while his private tragedy was nothing to them. He hated the sea—the cold, bright splendour of its June aspect hurt him, as he stared with lined eyes out to the horizon, seeing in fancy the spread canvas of the fatal ship that was taking her away from him, out to the horror of disease and death. He did not hesitate now to call the Mother Superior unscrupulous, or to curse her in his man's unavailing craving for the thing denied. The beauty of her serene face rising on his memory seemed a menace to him. Rome is always called unscrupulous by those who have been thwarted by the enormous force of its fanatics. The Mother Superior was no more unscrupulous than he would have been in persuading Leslie to another course, if he had had his turn ; but he had let it slip, and the white-winged ship was perhaps carrying her away even now in the shadow of that black-robed figure with the devotion to a vocation that he had not given to love itself. Then, in a change

of mood, he saw that Mother Ursula was not to be blamed for that the blame was all his own. She had thought with Leslie that he had accepted his freedom from obligation and gone back to the older bonds, allowing the girl to drop out of his life with consent if not complacency. Heartbroken, very loveless, and passionately capable of devotion, he knew exactly how Leslie would fling herself and her starved nature at the feet of such a woman as the Mother Superior ; and, without haste or coercion whatever, Mother Ursula had simply taken this strayed lamb into the fold, and given her such peace and comfort as she might. The outcry of that last letter had been for him alone. It was probable that the Mother had never heard from Leslie, however much her intuition told her of the girl's physical repulsion for the task she insisted on attempting, of her repressed passion for a man who had abandoned her.

But of what might happen after he dared not think too much—the wonderful, beautiful Island marred with wooden structures like barracks, the bush partly cleared, the workers—his sickened mind would hardly picture them—men and women with formless faces, flesh eaten away, every stage of the disease in all its horror. This nightmare darkening the face of the flowering wilderness where love had dwelt ! And among them all—Leslie ! He flinched to think of it, as she had done, and his limbs shuddered. Not Leslie—not the sound, sweet woman whom he had held in his arms, and felt her wholesome blood throbbing against his. Leslie—infected—unclean—her reluctant youth brought to the sacrifice with shivering disgust ! The cruelty of it ! Surely no mind but a fiend's could have conceived anything so ghastly. He turned back from his own imagining, and hurried away from the sight of the sea, back to his hotel, to inquire for the tenth time for the cable. He was helpless—tied. He had to rejoin his regiment next week, and return to the duties and routine of his life, and while on sick leave he could not, of course, leave England. The weight of civilization was upon him again, and he might not follow her to the ends of the earth and save her

from herself, as lawless love counselled. There are so many considerations to weigh with a man, as Edna had said—there is only one issue to a woman. Yet he could not believe that the worst could happen—even now his message might have stopped her. It must have done, if God had any mercy. . . .

The cable had come at last. He tore it open, and read with strained eyes.

“*Sarawak* sailed yesterday.”

Trelawny stood for a minute with the flimsy piece of paper in his hands, wondering that so small a thing could bear so heavy an import—then, with an impulse of rage against fate, he crushed it in his hand as if it could feel his anger, and flung it from him. The mood had passed the next moment, and left him ashamed of his childishness, and with a crushing sense of defeat. In all his rather matter-of-fact and easy-going life he had never been as hard hit by fortune as this—not even on the Island, for there he had always found compensations. He was of his class a very average Englishman, shunning emotion, not so much for its unpleasantness as that he hated to have his self-control threatened. He had had his passions, but they had not laid waste his life, which had been full of a thousand interests rather than one or two. Now he had to face what was to him a really great thing, and it found him blind and dumb.

He went out again from the hotel and walked about the streets of the city, seeing no face clearly, and not knowing whither he was going until he found himself in a quieter neighbourhood—a neighbourhood of side streets and respectably poor residents. He did not notice much. His brain was concerned with the cable message and his tardy remorse. “The *Sarawak* sailed yesterday. It is all my own fault. I have got to face the consequences,” said the monotonous monitor, spurring him to take it “standing up” at least, as his creed had taught him. No use complaining or appealing—it was his own fault. There was something a little pathetic in his blank acceptance of his deserts, while his own

feeling buffeted him beyond his understanding. He could hardly tell how this thing had happened. He knew that he had lost Leslie Mackelt, and that something too horrible to contemplate was going to happen to her through his fault. He was surprised to find himself clenching his hands, as though to prevent himself crying out.

Life had passed in leisurely fashion for Trelawny as regards mental experience until this hour. Now it was all crammed into small space, and he was enduring minute by minute what might have been filtered through years. It frightened him to find that he could feel so vividly and beyond his own control. He walked down the colourless, sordid streets, past the tiny houses, whose front strip of grass was railed off from the pavement, and he saw nothing until his eyes leapt to consciousness of a figure in the severe grey and white of a lay Sister of some Order who was coming out of one of the narrow gates, and as they reached the pavement together he came face to face with Leslie Mackelt. . . .

She might, indeed, have been a ghost, from the way in which she looked at him. Out of a face blanched by illness the bones seemed sharpened to harder angles, her lips were almost colourless and drawn in the set line of a middle-aged woman, and her hair was brushed back under the grey veil, so that the hollows showed in her temples. Nothing seemed alive in her save the feverish brown eyes, that stared out and beyond Trelawny as if she did not see him at all.

He had not cried out—he was sure he had not, for at first he had thought that her face and figure were really a trick of the imagination. But he followed her along the street, hanging so closely to her skirt that he nearly brushed against her. And yet she never looked round or seemed to realize his presence, but walked steadily on through street after street until she came to a larger house than the cottages she had been visiting, which were obviously some sort of hostelry, perhaps of her Order. She did not knock, but opened the door, which was on the latch, and passed in with Trelawny

still following her. They were in a square hall sparsely furnished, with doors upon all sides of them, and Leslie opened one of these and walked into an empty room—evidently a waiting-room for visitors or those on business. Still he followed, as if it were some unhappy dream, and then for the first time she turned and faced him, her back to the door she had closed, her grip still upon the handle.

"Why have you come to trouble my peace?" she said in a low voice, and the sound was hollow as a dead person's might be.

"I got your letter, and followed you to Liverpool," he answered in the same hushed fashion. "They told me—you had gone abroad. I cabled—but the ship had left Vancouver. I was afraid—" His voice died, and the nausea of physical fear that had overcome him at the thought of her destiny made him shudder again.

"Not yet!" she said, and her voice was like a wail. "Not yet! I had to wait a little longer, and then—we must go!" He heard the hissing breath of fear through her lips, and made an involuntary movement as if to shield her.

"How was it that you did not go?" he said dully. He had not realized the mercy yet. He only knew that she stood there repelling him without a word, and it was as if he talked to her through some impassable barrier.

"I fell ill," she said. "It was just at the last moment. Some little silly trifling complaint that our children had had in the school—German measles, I think, or chicken-pox. It was very slight, but being infectious, I could not take it on board, or let others run risks. If it had been a broken arm it need not have kept me!" she cried bitterly. "But this stupid ailment delays it all, and now it has to be done later on." He felt in some queer intuitive way that what she missed was the personality of the Mother Superior, the moral support that had carried her on to her sacrifice, and without which she grew more and more appalled at her approaching fate.

"One of the Sisters stayed behind with me," said

Leslie after a moment's pause. "We are going on next week. We shall miss some of the training—that is all."

Her voice dropped as if the subject were finished, but his own rose in passionate protest, almost to his own surprise, to find that he was suddenly possessed of words after his stunned lethargy.

"You shall not go! It is iniquitous to think of it—indeed you shall not, while I have any strength left to prevent you! Leslie, listen to me!" He tried to get nearer to her, but the curious, cynical smile on her stiff lips held him back against his will. "I am free—I would not come till I made things right with Edna. You can't deny me!—after what you told me—that last night—" He stopped confusedly, meeting her bright, hungry eyes.

"You were asleep!" she said.

"I was a senseless clod—a swine!" he cried. "But I am awake at last. I know how I want you. You must come to me, and be my wife. You can't go through with this mad scheme—it isn't in you. Only fanatics could do it, and you were never a fanatic, really. You want love—you will always need it. Don't you remember all those weeks on the Island when we knew that we were natural mates—"

"You were asleep!" she said softly, as if listening to some memory that was clearer than his voice.

"Leslie!" he said, and there was sharp fear in his voice at last. "I am only a man—not a conqueror. I can't force you as I thought to do. Won't you give it up, and come back to me? Won't you?" The sudden sense of his impotence struck him like a blow, so that he really reeled a little away from her, and stood staring at her tense white face.

"Listen!" she said very quickly and rapidly. "I think my heart is dead—I think I have quite killed every feeling in me but fear. I can still be afraid!" He knew the horror of which she thought, and flinched also. "But it is as if you spoke to a dead woman, who cannot hear you. And besides, I have promised!"

"It is a wicked promise!" he cried out in despair.
"It could not bind you!"

For a minute a puzzled look passed across her face, as if some doubt troubled her. Then the feverish eyes regained their rapt expression.

"I am quite dead," she repeated. "You cannot touch me now. You have left me too long alone—I died very slowly, but I think the very last spark of feeling has gone now."

Dead! with such eyes! He met their miserable brilliance with his own for an instant, and then, as if convinced, he dropped suddenly upon a little hard sofa by the bare wall and hid his face in his hands. It was not tears—it was only the demand for a moment's breathing space in which to face failure. She had forced his humiliation upon him, and, as he admitted, he was no conqueror. He sat still and let the World pass by for a minute, as we all do at the worst moments of our lives.

Leslie Mackelt stood and looked at him, and as she looked her face broke up from its deathlike mask in a hideous fashion. It was as if her features worked out of their repose in a throe of agony, and it was not good to see—but Trelawny's face was hidden. Then with one fierce movement she tore the veil and coif from her head, loosening the thick dark hair by her roughness, and the next instant had flung herself across the space between them. She was down on the floor, her face buried on his knees, her arms wide-stretched for him, a passion-broken thing that asked no mercy and felt nothing but the imperative necessity of the one woman to the one man. . . .

And so he took her.

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